



FALL 2026 EDITION

# TRANSITION ACADEMY MAGAZINE



## CELEBRATING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

**COVER PHOTO:** LEARNING & EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LEAP) STUDENTS ATTENDING THE SPRING 2026 COMPLETION AWARDS CEREMONY HONORING THEIR RESILIENCE AND GROWTH.

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# TRANSITION ACADEMY Magazine

FALL 2026 -  
EDITION -

STORIES OF PERSISTENCE, COMMUNITY AND STUDENT SUCCESS

## Transition Academy: Now Serving Your Academic Journey

Beyond housing and nutrition, we are here to help you master the classroom. Join our new workshop series designed to sharpen your college readiness and success skills.

### A Message from the Transition Academy

Welcome to the Fall 2026 edition of the Transition Academy Magazine. This issue marks a new direction for our publication. In the past, our publications focused primarily on programs, events and activities. While those updates remain important, we wanted to create something that better reflects the people at the heart of this work. Beginning with this issue, we are placing a greater emphasis on student voices, personal experiences and the stories that often go untold.

Every student who walks through our doors arrives with a unique lived experience. Some are returning to college after many years away from the classroom. Some are balancing work, family responsibilities, and academic demands. Others are navigating housing insecurity, financial challenges, or obstacles that are not always visible to those around them. Their stories deserve to be heard.

Throughout this issue, you will meet students who have demonstrated resilience, determination, and a willingness to invest in themselves. You will read about the challenges they have faced, the support they have received, and the goals they continue to pursue. Their experiences remind us that student success is not defined by a single moment. It is built through persistence, community and the courage to keep moving forward.

This issue also highlights the many opportunities available through the Transition Academy, including college readiness programming, peer mentoring, emergency support services, basic needs resources, leadership development and community-building initiatives. Our goal remains the same: to connect students with the resources, guidance, and support they need to thrive both inside and outside the classroom.

We are deeply grateful to the faculty, staff, campus partners, and community organizations that continue to support our students and our mission. Your partnership helps create pathways to success and expands opportunities for students who may otherwise face barriers to achieving their goals.

As we look ahead to Fall 2026, we are excited about what is to come. We are preparing to welcome a new Learning & Educational Assistance Program (LEAP) cohort, expand student engagement opportunities, strengthen partnerships across campus and continue developing programs that respond to the evolving needs of our students.

Thank you for being part of the Transition Academy community. We hope these stories inspire you, encourage you, and remind you of the impact that can be made when students are given the support they need to succeed.

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# Upcoming Events & Program Calendar

Here is a detailed look at our upcoming schedule. We invite you to join us for learning, fellowship and service.



## SEPT Student Support

- Community Pantry (Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> , 17<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>)
- Helping Hands application reopens (Sept 7<sup>th</sup>)
- Transition Academy Info Session (Sept 16<sup>th</sup>)
- Community Health Fair (Sept 19<sup>th</sup>)
- Student Feeding Program (\*Every Wednesday)

\*excluding holidays

## OCT Lifestyle

- Housing Clinic & Resource Fair (Oct 1<sup>st</sup>)
- Community Pantry (Oct 1<sup>st</sup> , 15<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>)
- Finders Keepers Thrift Store Event (Oct 14<sup>th</sup>)
- Student Feeding Program (\*Every Wednesday)

\*excluding holidays



## NOV Activism

- Community Pantry (Nov 5<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>)
- LEAP Awards Ceremony (Nov 6<sup>th</sup> )
- Combat Hunger Week (Nov 16<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>)
- Diabetes Awareness Week ( Nov 17<sup>th</sup> - Panel)
- Diabetes Awareness Week ( Nov 18<sup>th</sup> - Walk)
- Student Feeding Program (\*Every Wednesday)

\*excluding holidays

## DEC Charity

- Community Pantry (Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>)
- Annual Holiday Toy Giveaway (Dec 16<sup>th</sup>)
- Student Feeding Program (\*Every Wednesday)

\*excluding holidays





# Feature Story -



JADE ASHTON, SOPHOMORE

## Raising Five Daughters. Earning a Degree. Refusing to Give Up.

There are classes to attend, assignments to finish, meals to prepare and daughters counting on her. Somehow, Jade finds a way to make room for all of it.

By: Khaalida Jones

Most mornings, before the sun has fully settled over Brooklyn, Jade Ashton is already awake. As the single mother of five daughters, her mornings are less about quiet routines and more about making sure everyone gets out the door on time. There are breakfasts to prepare, reminders to give, backpacks to check, and, as Jade puts it with a laugh, "getting teenagers moving in the morning."

Only after her daughters are on their way does she turn her attention to another role she never imagined she would have again: being a college student. Although Jade does her best to manage her responsibilities, she admits "it's busy and often feels chaotic." With a hybrid schedule, she says that "sometimes I have an online class in the morning, so it's hard to divide my attention, but I get it done."

The pace, however, rarely slows down. After classes, there is work, dinner to prepare and doing homework with her daughters. Like many juggling multiple roles, sometimes dinner comes from a restaurant because there simply aren't enough hours in the day. When the house finally becomes quiet, Jade starts her routine of completing assignments, studying and preparing for the next day.

### Learning to Balance It All

Jade does not pretend she has everything figured out. In fact, she says she's still learning. "Managing family responsibilities and school demands is something I am still learning every day." Some days are overwhelming. Some days everything seems urgent at once.

Through the Learning & Educational Assistance Program (LEAP) College Readiness Workshop Program, Jade found practical tools that helped her begin organizing the competing demands of family, work and school. Workshops on time management, budgeting, and balancing responsibilities gave her strategies she continues to use. Just as important, they reminded her to give herself grace. "I'm working to create schedules, plan ahead when possible, and give myself grace when things don't go perfectly because, trust me, I can be really hard on myself."

### Leading by Example

When Jade talks about why she keeps going, she doesn't mention grades first. She talks about her daughters. "No matter how tired or overwhelmed I may feel, they remind me why I started this journey." She wants to be a role model for her girls and to know that determination matters.

She also draws strength from her sisters, both nurses, who jokingly tell her they can't wait for her to join the "nurse gang." Their encouragement has helped keep her focused on her own goal of becoming a nurse. "They've always been there to support me," she said.

### Hard Work Pays Off

The long nights and early mornings have produced remarkable results. Since returning to college, Jade has earned a place on the Dean's List for three consecutive semesters. She has also received Provost's List honors while balancing motherhood, work and college.

Those accomplishments carry special meaning because she knows what they required. "Being a mom and a student at the same time can be challenging, but it reminds me that I can do hard things and still work toward the future I want for myself and my daughters."

### Finding Community Through LEAP

Jade says LEAP became much more than a series of workshops. It became a place where she found support, encouragement, and people who understood her experience. The workshops covered everything from financial literacy and interviewing to networking and study strategies.



JADE &amp; TRACY MORGAN

For Jade, success isn't about doing everything perfectly. It's about showing up every day, even when the day feels impossible.

They also helped her develop greater confidence. "I've never been someone who enjoys being in the spotlight or speaking in front of groups," she said. "Some of the workshops really pushed me outside of my comfort zone." She learned how to introduce herself professionally, deliver an elevator pitch, and prepare for internships and future career opportunities.

For Jade, the practical support mattered too. The iPad she received by being a part of LEAP made it easier to complete assignments whether she was on campus or at home, while the OMNY transportation stipend reduced the cost of commuting and made attending classes less stressful.

#### **A Mentor Who Believed in Her**

Every LEAP participant is paired with a peer mentor. For Jade, that mentor was Angel. When Jade shared her goal of entering the nursing program, Angel immediately began gathering study materials, websites, and resources to help prepare her for the National League for Nursing entrance exam.

More than anything, Angel became one of her biggest supporters. "She constantly reminded me that I could do this," Jade said. Whenever Jade had questions or needed encouragement, Angel was only a phone call away. Having someone who believed in her has made a lasting difference.

Jade's resolve was recognized at the LEAP Completion Ceremony, where Jade received the Resilience & Persistence Award in recognition of her perseverance, commitment to her education, and ability to overcome obstacles while balancing the responsibilities of college, work and raising her daughters.

As she accepted the award, Jade delivered heartfelt remarks which moved everyone in attendance. Her words resonated throughout the room and culminated in one of the ceremony's most memorable moments when keynote speaker Tracy Morgan rose from his seat to embrace her. The spontaneous gesture reflected the impact of her story and the strength it took to pursue her education while caring for her family.

#### **Moving Forward**

Jade's story is one of determination, but she is quick to point out that success doesn't happen all at once. It happens one assignment at a time, one early morning at a time, one class at a time and one leap at a time. She knows that it will all bring her one step closer to the future she has imagined for herself and for her daughters.

As Jade continues pursuing a career in nursing, she hopes her journey reminds others that balancing family and education is never easy, but it is possible. And every day she walks into class, she is teaching her daughters the definition of determination.



### **Find Your Place at the Transition Academy**

College is about more than attending classes. It's about finding the support, resources, and community that help you succeed.

Whether you're looking for academic guidance, a peer mentor, basic needs support, leadership opportunities, or simply a place to connect, the Transition Academy is here to help.

Our initiatives include the Learning & Educational Assistance Program (LEAP), the TA Café, food pantry, Finders Keepers thrift store, emergency grants, workshops, and referrals to campus and community resources designed to help students overcome challenges and stay focused on their goals.

Every student's journey is different, but one truth remains the same: you don't have to navigate college alone. Stop by the Transition Academy, explore what's available and take the first step toward becoming part of a community that believes in your potential.

#### **CONTACT:**

**PHONE: 718-270-6988**

**EMAIL: [TRANSITIONACADEMY@MEC.CUNY.EDU](mailto:TRANSITIONACADEMY@MEC.CUNY.EDU)**

**ADDRESS: 1150 CARROLL ST. ROOM: C-207**



# The Transition Academy ~At a Glance~

SCAN ME



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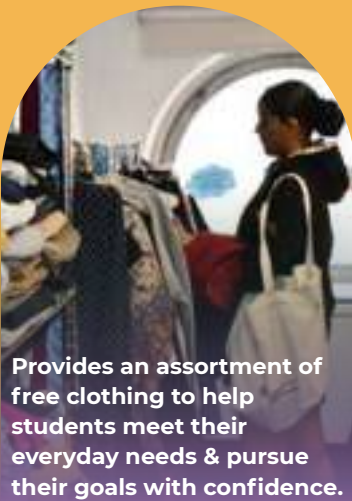
718-270-6988

1150 CARROLL STREET, RM. C-207

TRANSITIONACADEMY@MEC.CUNY.EDU

## Finders Keepers Thrift Store

Dress with Confidence



Provides an assortment of free clothing to help students meet their everyday needs & pursue their goals with confidence.

## Pantry

Supplies students with free groceries and essential personal care items to help reduce food insecurity and support their overall well-being. On select days, we open the pantry to the wider Medgar Evers College campus as well as to local community members.

## LEAP College Readiness Program

LEAP empowers first and second-year students through personalized coaching, peer mentoring, engaging workshops, and academic resources that strengthen their college readiness, build confidence, and support long-term achievement.



## T.A. Cafe

Refuel for the Day  
Ahead



The cafe offers a welcoming space where students can enjoy complimentary snacks, microwavable meals and beverages.

## Helping Hands Grant

Unexpected financial emergencies should not derail a student's education. The Helping Hands Grant provides up to \$3,000 in one-time, non-academic assistance for qualifying students.



## Housing Assistance

A Safe Place to Start



Whether facing an unexpected housing crisis or searching for stable living arrangements, the Transition Academy helps to connect students with community and city-based resources.



# Student Spotlight



## WHY I CAME BACK

### Keisha's Journey Back to College After Putting Everyone Else First

By: Khaalida Jones

For years, Keisha Cummings carried a dream that always seemed just out of reach. Born and raised in Jamaica, she came to the United States determined to build a better life. Like many people, she imagined that education would be part of that journey. But life had other plans.

There were children to raise, family members to support, bills to pay and many other responsibilities that demanded her attention every day. Every New Year, she would sit down and write out her goals. Returning to school was always there. Usually somewhere around number four. Still, the years passed by with those dream unfulfilled.

#### Putting My Dreams on Hold

"I always wanted to go back to school," Keisha said. "I just kept putting everyone else first." As the primary source of support for family both here and abroad, college often felt like a luxury she could not afford. Her focus remained fixed on her family.

Keisha watched her children grow up. She helped nieces and nephews complete their educational goals. She cared for her aging parents. It was only after losing her father last year that she began thinking seriously about what she wanted for

herself. For years she had told herself one thing. "I did not want to leave this world without earning a degree."

#### Taking a Chance on Myself

A chance conversation with a stranger who had returned to school at Medgar Evers College helped push her toward a decision she had been considering for years. With that, Keisha decided to take a chance on herself and enrolled.

#### Learning to Believe I Belonged

Starting college again was not easy. Keisha worried about her age, keeping up with assignments and learning technology that younger students seemed to already understand. "The hardest part was believing that I could actually do it," she said. Those early days came with plenty of uncertainty, but Keisha kept showing up. With each class and each new skill, college began to feel a little less intimidating.

#### Finding Support Through LEAP

When Keisha joined the Learning & Educational Assistance Program (LEAP), she found people willing to meet her where she was and help her figure things out along the way. Dr. Boone, Ms. Jones and her peer mentor, Xavier, helped her navigate everything from enrollment to technology. Xavier showed her how to use her college email, check messages and submit assignments online. "Those things may sound small," she said. "But they

made a huge difference for me."

LEAP also helped ease practical barriers. The OMNY transportation stipend reduced the cost of getting to campus, while the iPad made it easier to access assignments, course materials and online resources. Little by little, the uncertainty Keisha felt when she first returned to school began to fade.

#### Looking Ahead

Today, Keisha no longer wonders if she made the right decision to return to college. She knows she did. The technology that once intimidated her has become part of her daily routine and the self-doubt she carried into her first semester is being replaced by confidence in what she can accomplish.

Earning a degree remains the goal that brought her back to school, but Keisha now sees more possibilities ahead. She wants to keep learning, growing and creating opportunities she once thought had passed her by. She also hopes her story reaches someone who may still be waiting for the "right time" to take that first step.

After spending so much of her life helping others reach their goals, Keisha is finally giving herself that same opportunity.



# Student Spotlight



## Creating Stability While Building a Future

How One Student Found Support, Stayed Persistent and Took Ownership of Her Housing Journey

By: Khaalida Jones

When Medgar Evers College student, Tania Ndagano, began searching for an apartment, she quickly realized finding affordable housing in New York City would be one of the biggest challenges she would face. As a full-time student working part time, she spent months searching for an apartment she could afford. She searched listings, reached out to landlords, filled out applications, and waited for responses. Some days were encouraging while others were frustrating. Confiding her struggles with her academic advisor, she was referred to the Transition Academy.

### A Place to Begin

When Tania met with the Transition Academy's senior staff member, Yodline Desire, the focus wasn't simply on finding an apartment. It was about understanding where she was, what challenges she was facing, and what resources could help her move forward.

During the intake process, Yodline took time to learn about Tania's housing search, current circumstances, and immediate needs. Together, they discussed potential options and identified housing agencies that regularly work with students seeking affordable housing.

By the end of the meeting, Tania left with several referrals and a clearer plan for moving forward. She knew the

search would still require persistence, but she also knew where to turn for guidance along the way.

### Doing the Work

The referrals gave Tania new places to start, but she knew the next steps were hers to take. She called every agency and asked every question imaginable. She stayed organized and kept searching. "Searching for an affordable apartment felt like a full-credit class of its own," she said. "It required attention, diligence, and consistency every day." It wasn't always easy, but she refused to give up.

### When Persistence Pays Off

While following up on referrals from the Transition Academy, Tania also continued checking on applications she submitted on her own. Then came the call she had been waiting for. A Housing Connect application she had completed months earlier had finally come through. She had been selected for a studio apartment in a newly constructed building not far from campus.

### Support Is a Partnership

Tania is the first to say that the Transition Academy didn't find her apartment for her. What the Academy did provide was something just as important: a place to ask questions, people who listened, and referrals that helped her expand her search. "Having access to their advisors and network of resources really made me

feel supported as I navigated my housing search in New York City," she said. From there, the responsibility became hers.

### Building More Than Stability

Today, Tania has more than a place to live. She has the stability to focus on her education and continue working toward her goals. Her story reflects circumstances the Transition Academy sees every day: students arriving with different needs and different challenges. To address those needs, the Academy connects them with resources, referrals and support, but lasting success comes from students taking an active role in their own journey.

For Tania, asking for help was only the beginning. What happened next was the result of showing up, staying consistent and believing that the next phone call or application could change everything.

Looking back, Tania believes her success came from combining the support that was available with a willingness to stay engaged throughout the process. "It's with a positive mindset, an openness to seeking assistance, and utilizing all of the resources available, such as the Transition Academy, that I was able to persevere and successfully secure my apartment."



# Student Spotlight -



## One Student + Multiple Resources = One Community of Support.

The Transition Academy is not one dimensional, but an ecosystem of opportunity.

By: Khaalida Jones

When students first walk through the doors of the Transition Academy, they often come looking for one type of service. Maybe it is help finding food. Maybe it is help finding housing. Maybe it is guidance navigating college. What many students discover is that the Academy offers much more than they expected. For Tiffanie Cummings, what began as a simple introduction to the Academy became a connection to multiple programs and services that supported both her academic and everyday life.

### Starting With One Resource

Like many students, Tiffanie's first connection to the Transition Academy came through a basic need. Feeling nervous as a new student on campus, she was introduced to the food pantry by a friend who encouraged her to stop by and learn more about the resources available. What started as a visit to access groceries quickly became something more.

Through the intake process, Tiffanie learned about additional supports available to Medgar Evers College students and began regularly visiting the pantry for essentials such as bread, eggs and fresh produce. "The pantry helped me not have to worry about groceries during a difficult time," she shared. "It gave me access to food and helped take some of the stress off my shoulders."

As she became more familiar with the Academy, Tiffanie began attending campus

events and discovered even more opportunities to support her success.

### Making the Most of Opportunities

One of the turning points in Tiffanie's journey came when she learned about the Learning & Educational Assistance Program (LEAP). Initially unsure about applying, she was encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity and eventually joined the program. Participating in LEAP opened the door to new skills, new connections and a deeper understanding of the resources available across campus.

"That's when I realized the Transition Academy offered more than just the pantry," Tiffanie explained. "The LEAP workshops helped me with time management, procrastination, saving money, and learning about different resources on campus." Beyond LEAP, Tiffanie accessed support through the Finders Keepers thrift shop, where she was able to obtain clothing and build confidence in her appearance.

Tiffanie also received technology resources, including an iPad (via the LEAP program), which helped her complete coursework and stay engaged academically. Each resource addressed a different need, but together they created a support system that strengthened her overall college experience.

### More Than a Collection of Services

For Tiffanie, the greatest impact was

not any one program. It was knowing there was a place on campus where she could turn to when challenges arose.

During a particularly difficult period, she was able to access hygiene products and additional assistance that helped her navigate personal circumstances while remaining focused on her education. Those experiences also taught her something equally valuable: how to advocate for herself.

"Now I know where to go and who to talk to when I need something," she explained. "I know how to speak up for myself and find the right people to help me move forward." Today, Tiffanie hopes to share that message with other students who may be reluctant to seek assistance. "It's okay to ask for help," she said. "Everyone goes through challenges. The programs are there for a reason, and they can make a difference."

Tiffanie's journey illustrates what happens when students are connected not just to a single service, but to a community invested in their growth. A visit to the food pantry led to leadership development through LEAP, access to technology, connections with campus partners, and a greater sense of belonging.



# Building a Foundation for Student Success -



PRESIDENT RAMSEY, TRACY MORGAN, RICHARD GREENE, TRINITY CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES, AND L.E.A.P STUDENTS AND STAFF

Inside the Transition Academy’s newest initiative to remove barriers, foster belonging and prepare students for long-term success.

By: Khaalida Jones

Student success looks different for everyone. For some, it means raising their GPA. For others, it means finding the confidence to ask for help, making connections on campus or simply believing they belong in college. The Transition Academy created the Learning & Educational Assistance Program (LEAP) with that understanding in mind.

Made possible through a \$200,000 grant from Trinity Church Philanthropies, LEAP was developed to help first and second-year students build the skills, confidence and support network needed to thrive at Medgar Evers College. The program combines academic guidance with personal development, recognizing that students often need more than classroom instruction to reach their goals.

During its inaugural Spring 2026 cohort, students participated in an eight-week College Readiness Workshop Series that explored academic success, leadership, wellness, financial literacy, career readiness and professional preparedness. The workshops were designed to be practical and interactive, giving students tools they could immediately apply both inside and outside the classroom.

At the center of LEAP is the belief that students succeed when they feel connected to a community that believes in their potential. Each participant was paired with a trained peer mentor who offered encouragement, shared

personal experiences and helped students navigate the challenges of college life. Students also had access to one-on-one coaching and social work support through the Transition Academy, creating another layer of guidance whenever obstacles arose.

The program also helped remove barriers that often stand in the way of student success. To support their academic success, each participant received a new iPad to more readily access their coursework. In addition, eligible participants received OMNY cards to help ease transportation costs throughout the semester. To further foster engagement and community, catered meals were provided during each session of the workshop series. As Dr. Waleek Boone, Director of the Transition Academy, explains, “We provide the resources for students to empower themselves.”

The results from the inaugural cohort reflect the impact of the program’s holistic approach. LEAP achieved a 90 percent completion rate. Additionally, ninety-two percent of participants reported feeling more prepared for college and experiencing a stronger sense of belonging. Participants also demonstrated an average GPA increase of 4.41 percent compared with their Fall 2025 average.

As LEAP prepares to welcome its next cohort, the program continues to build on a simple idea: when students are given meaningful guidance, practical resources, and a community that believes in them, they are better equipped to succeed throughout their academic and professional journeys.



## A Message from the LEAP Team

The success of LEAP’s inaugural cohort reminds us that student success is about more than grades.

It is about connection.  
It is about support.  
It is about helping students believe they belong and giving them the tools to move forward.

We are grateful to our students, peer mentors, faculty, staff and community partners for helping make this important work possible.

As we prepare for the Fall 2026 cohort, we look forward to welcoming a new group of students into the LEAP community and continuing to build pathways to academic success, personal growth and a sense of belonging.

Thank you for being part of this journey!

**CONTACT:**  
**PHONE: 718-270-6988**  
**EMAIL: LEAP@MEC.CUNY.EDU**  
**ADDRESS: 1150 CARROLL ST. ROOM: C-207**  
**BROOKLYN, NY 11225**



718-270-6988      1150 CARROLL STREET, RM. C-207      LEAP@MEC.CUNY.EDU



IMPACT REPORTING  
LEAP by the Numbers

Spring 2026 marked the official start of the Learning & Educational Assistance Program (LEAP). Throughout the semester, participants engaged in eight workshops focused on academic success, leadership development, wellness, financial literacy, career readiness and college navigation.

24  
Participants\*  
90% COMPLETION RATE  
\*Student participants and peer mentors



4.41%  
AVERAGE GPA INCREASE  
Compared to Fall 2025 average GPA

92%  
Participants reported feeling more prepared for college along with a greater sense of belonging.





# Event Recap

## LEAP Celebrates Its Inaugural Cohort

The Learning & Educational Assistance Program (LEAP) celebrated its first graduating cohort. The completion ceremony recognized the students, peer mentors and community partners for a job well done. They received awards recognizing their resilience, engagement and leadership throughout the semester. The event also celebrated the partnership between Trinity Church Philanthropies, Medgar Evers College and the Transition Academy.

Comedian and actor Tracy Morgan served as keynote speaker, sharing personal reflections about mentorship, perseverance and the importance of seeking guidance from trusted mentors.

Access Morgan’s speech here:



## LEAP Student Special Recognition -



Jade Ashton

**Resilience & Persistence Award**

Presented in recognition of determination, perseverance, and the ability to remain committed to growth in the face of challenges.



Xael Bastien

**Excellence in Engagement Award**

Presented in recognition of consistent participation, active contribution and a strong commitment to the LEAP learning experience.



Xavier Williams

**Outstanding Peer Mentor Award**

Presented in recognition of exceptional leadership, mentorship and unwavering dedication to student success.



Eternity Council

**Student Impact Award**

Presented in recognition of meaningful contributions that positively influenced student growth, engagement and overall experience.



Scan Code to Access  
the LEAP Interest Form

**What Is LEAP?**  
LEAP (Learning & Educational Assistance Program) is a program designed to support freshmen and sophomores as they navigate college academically, personally and professionally.

**Why LEAP?**  
Participants receive wraparound support including peer mentoring, meals during sessions, academic supplies, technology and OMNY cards (for eligible students).



# Transition Academy Portfolio (2025-2026)

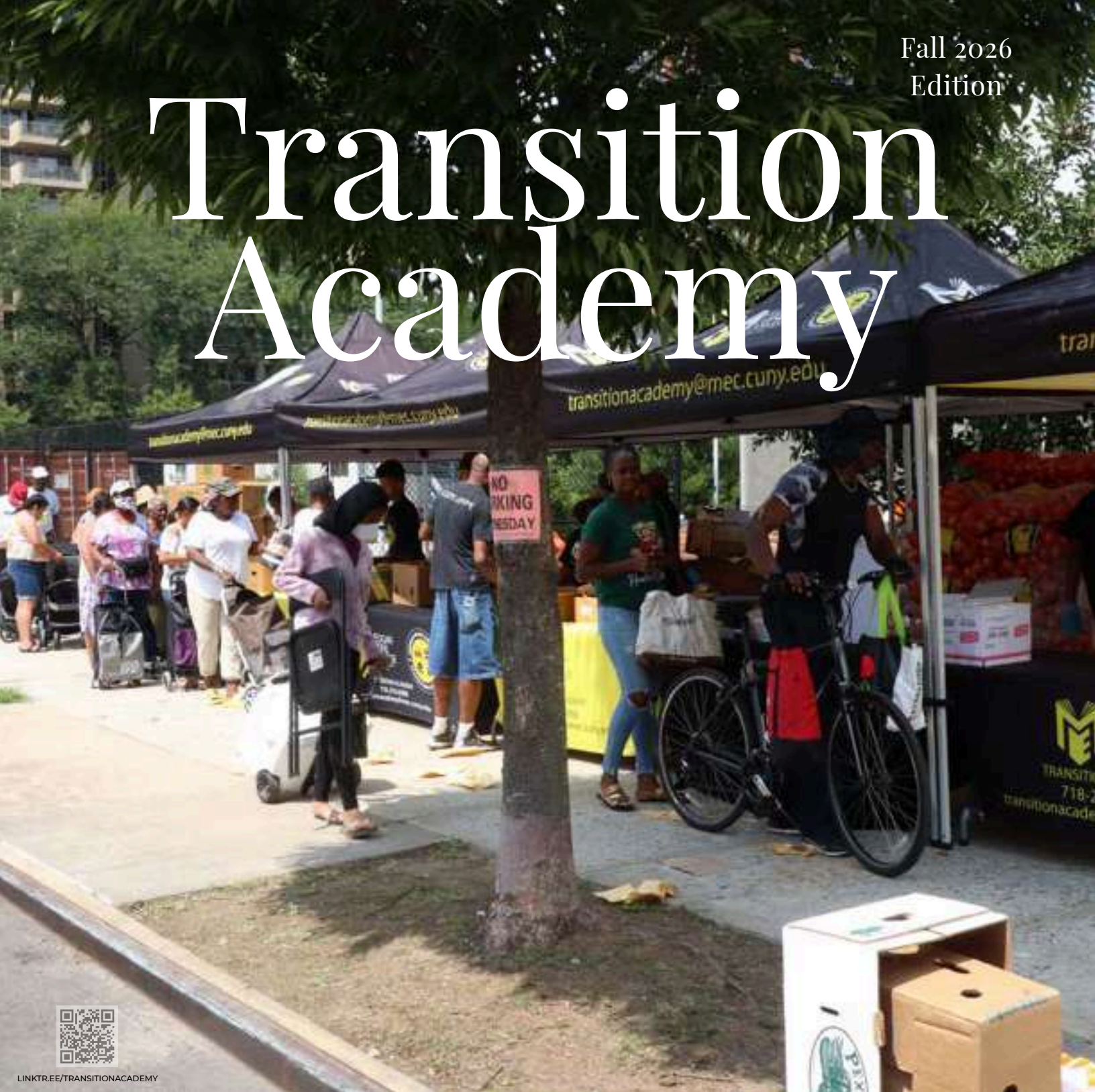






Fall 2026  
Edition

# Transition Academy



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## HOUSING

The Transition Academy connects students experiencing housing insecurity with community resources to help them find safe and stable housing.

## EMERGENCY GRANT

The Transition Academy provides emergency financial assistance to help students overcome unexpected hardships and stay on track towards completing their degree program.

## PANTRY -

The Transition Academy Food Pantry offers free groceries and essential household items to help ensure students have reliable and consistent access to nutritious food.

Contact:

Address: 1150 Carroll St. Room: C-207 | Email: [transitionacademy@mec.cuny.edu](mailto:transitionacademy@mec.cuny.edu) | Phone: 718-270-6988