

1. LaGuardia Submission: MetLife Community College Excellence Award (2005)

LaGuardia Community College/CUNY

Overview

Since accepting its first incoming class in 1971, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College has been a gateway to college for thousands of students – immigrant, minority, low-income, first-generation college – who might not otherwise have had access to higher education. As one of 17 undergraduate colleges of the City University of New York (CUNY), LaGuardia serves over 13,500 degree students and 39,000 students in non-credit and outreach programs.

The 2000 Census identified the Borough of Queens as the most diverse county in the nation. In addition to having large Black, Hispanic and Asian populations, more than 500,000 immigrants entered the borough during the past ten years. As part of this community, LaGuardia Community College reflects these demographics. Among our degree students, approximately two-thirds are foreign born and, of these, almost half have been in the U.S. under five years, representing over 150 countries and speaking over 110 different languages. Seventy-nine percent of our students are minorities; 60% are first-generation college students and two-thirds of entering students report a family income of \$25,000 or less.

To transform access into success for what may be the most diverse student population that has ever come together in the history of higher education, LaGuardia strives to address the complexity of our students' lives and educational

needs. Our students must negotiate multiple cultures, languages, and boundaries. Their lives demand that we employ a multifaceted approach to promoting success along every step of a student's educational journey. Beginning at the secondary level, LaGuardia's groundbreaking on-campus high schools – Middle College High School, International High School, and Robert F. Wagner, Jr. School of the Arts and Technology - have been national models for promoting access to higher education for "at-risk" and immigrant students. A \$7.6 million Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant will allow replication of our EXCEL early college program in 17 schools across the country. Our "College Now" Program gives 3,000 high school students the opportunity to take college classes each year, resulting in improved grades and retention when these students subsequently enter CUNY. For non-degree students, the College's Division of Adult and Continuing Education provides alternative entryways to further education and job training, meeting the diverse needs of our surrounding communities. Once students enter LaGuardia, our award-winning first-year program provides a seamless transition from the developmental work that the majority of students require to college-level studies. There is a free, intensive basic skills immersion program, offered in both summer and winter. Within our First-Year Academies, there are learning communities that contextualize learning by linking basic skills and content courses, extensive tutoring, an early experience with cooperative education, and co-curricular activities focused around specific disciplines. We build community among our commuting student body through activities such as a common reading, mentoring, online advisement via our innovative Virtual Interest Groups, and an "Opening Sessions" Program for

New Students. Financial support is becoming more extensive as our newly-created LaGuardia Foundation raises funds for student scholarships.

As students progress in their academic careers, their learning is promoted through high quality instructional programs. Learning is enhanced by technology and other pedagogical innovations, deepened through the development of electronic portfolios, and supported by peer tutoring in “high-risk” courses. Continuous improvement of instruction is ensured at LaGuardia through a comprehensive outcomes assessment program and extensive professional development for faculty. As a result, LaGuardia has achieved outstanding outcomes, including graduation and first-year retention rates higher than the national average. Many honors and accolades attest to the quality of the educational experience offered by LaGuardia Community College:

- In recent years, Community College Week has consistently ranked LaGuardia among the top 10 community colleges nationally in the number of Associate Degrees awarded to minority students.**
- The Policy Center on the First Year of College named LaGuardia in 2003 an “Institution of Excellence,” one of only 13 colleges – including just two community colleges – selected nationally from 130 nominees.**
- In 2004, LaGuardia received the prestigious Theodore Hesburgh Certificate of Excellence for the quality of its faculty development program.**
- LaGuardia was named in 2004 a “Best Practice College” by the MetLife Foundation, one of nine colleges honored.**

- **LaGuardia was named in 2004 one of the top three large community colleges in the United States by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement.**

I. Aggressive Recruitment and Outreach

In 2001, LaGuardia's enrollment experienced a decline after several years of stability; in response, the College developed a strategic enrollment management plan and put institutional resources, including new hires, toward more aggressive recruitment and outreach among our immigrant and minority constituents. In the public advertising area, the College initiated an advertising campaign in foreign language newspapers, now advertising in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Polish, Japanese, Bengali, Urdu, Greek, Turkish, Arabic, and Romanian. The targets in these communities are primarily older students who can take advantage of the College's ESL resources, in both credit and non-credit programs. Additionally, the Student Information Center has assigned dedicated phone lines with messages in a variety of languages and developed bilingual student cultural liaisons in Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Romanian, Korean, and Bengali.

In addition to the advertising initiative, the College has strengthened its targeted recruitment. To connect with neighborhood residents who might otherwise not hear about the College, admissions staff visit area housing projects. Because a working relationship has been established with the NYC Job Corps, students are able to start on a GED path with the eventual goal of entering higher education.

The College has targeted community-based organizations and boys' clubs as venues for increased outreach to black males. The College also offers opportunities to ex-offenders and effective outreach to students with limited English proficiency through neighborhood-based intensive language programs.

Outcomes: As a result of these efforts, overall enrollment increased by 7% from Fall 2003 to Fall 2004, with a 12% increase in black students, 6% increase in Hispanic students, and 4% increase in Asian students.

II. Support: Academic, Social, and Financial

LaGuardia's diversity brings onto campus students who have been traditionally underserved by the educational system and academically underprepared. Almost 90% of first-time, degree-seeking students need at least one developmental skills course. LaGuardia students must also cope with the demands of their outside lives. Almost half of the new students hold down jobs and all students commute. Part-time enrollment has increased over the past decade from 29% to 40%. Because of these characteristics, the sense of connection to the institution - so necessary to increasing persistence - is difficult to achieve. These facts, coupled with the multiple linguistic and cultural barriers that an extraordinarily diverse student body faces, led LaGuardia to design a comprehensive approach to achieving two major goals:

a) fostering academic success among developmental and ESL students through seamless transitions into discipline-based work, and b) creating a sense of community and heightened engagement with the College. As research shows that the first college

year has the highest attrition rate, a strong focus has been placed on the first-year student through learning communities, First-Year Academies, specially-designed intensive courses, a common reading, an “opening sessions” event, and first-year mentoring. Activities that extend beyond the First-Year include the Leadership & Diversity Program, the Minority Male Retention Program, and eTransfer/Virtual Interest Groups. For all students, the College offers extensive tutoring both in basic skills courses and discipline areas.

Learning Communities. One of LaGuardia’s most successful efforts at fostering student success has been our learning community program. Indeed, the College has a long history and national reputation in this field. As the nation’s college population becomes increasingly diversified, particularly with increasing numbers of non-native speakers, LaGuardia’s experience offers a model for achieving success with this population. Specifically, LaGuardia’s experience suggests that academic skills are best acquired in a college setting in which students can apply their developing skills to the academic subject-matter at hand, rather than in a setting where skills instruction occurs separately from, and prior to, content-area instruction. Thus, first-year learning communities at LaGuardia typically link developmental courses with credit-bearing courses in the disciplines. The College’s Academic ESL Program has taken the lead in developing such communities, normally offering twenty or more sections each semester that pair ESL courses with courses such as Accounting, Introduction to Business, Introduction to Computers, Introduction to Sociology, and Biochemistry. In the College’s “New Student House” model, students register for a full-time program linking two developmental courses

with a discipline-based course, as well as a New Student Seminar taught by a counselor. Faculty collaborate to produce an integrated curriculum that includes joint projects, library instruction provided by one of the college librarians, a library project, and field trips. The curriculum is integrated by developing themes such as “Immigrants in the U.S.” and “The Women’s Rights Movement in Early 19th Century America”. Liberal Arts students who do not require developmental studies participate in a “Liberal Arts Cluster.” These learning communities also develop themes to integrate English Composition, a research paper course, a one-credit Integrating Seminar, and two courses from various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

Outcomes: The College’s repeated assessments of learning communities have revealed the benefit of this approach in improving the learning outcomes of first-year students. These assessments have been conducted on an ongoing basis:

- A 1999 study showed that, of the 37 courses in Fall 1998 that included at least one section also taught in a learning community, 25 of those sections (68%) had higher pass rates than for the other sections of that course. In Spring 1999, of 35 courses offered with at least one section taught as part of a learning community, 25 (or 71%) had pass rates higher than for the other sections of that course.
- In 2002, the College conducted a massive quantitative study of ten years of data on ESL learning communities, analyzing over 90,000 course sections. The data showed ESL students in paired courses (in which students are “mainstreamed” into discipline-based courses earlier than usual in their

academic careers) do as well as, or better than, both non-ESL students and ESL students taking those discipline-based courses in a non-paired mode later in their academic careers. In addition to higher grades, there was a statistically significant relationship between passing and participating in a learning community; that is to say, students were more likely to pass a particular course (whether a content, basic skills, or ESL course) when the course was in a learning community. The College is now in the process of updating this study through 2004; preliminary data indicate that the benefits of the ESL learning community approach are continuing.

- Recent assessments of New Student House and Liberal Arts clusters, which analyzed data collected over an eight-year period, demonstrated improved outcomes in these communities. Students in the New Student House passed the basic reading and basic writing courses at higher rates than students who took both courses in the same semester, but not in the Student House setting. Passing rates for sections of Freshman Composition offered in Liberal Arts clusters were ten percent higher than in stand-alone sections. In addition, data collected since 1996 show that pass rates for ESL courses offered as part of an ESL New Student House are on average 10% higher than for the same level ESL course not offered as part of the Student House.

First-Year Academies. An assessment of first-year programs completed three years ago identified a number of challenges that still remained: some elements of the first-year were still fragmented (e.g., extra-curricular activities are not well-integrated with the curriculum); most students were still not receiving enough information

about career development as indicated by their survey responses; the pedagogical approach of linking skills and content was not widespread enough; students did not feel that basic skills courses related to their majors; the demands of skills courses and discipline courses were not consistently aligned; and the college's sheer size made it difficult to offer successful initiatives such as learning communities on a scale that would serve the majority of incoming students.

To address these issues, the College piloted a "First-Year (FY) Academy" model last year in order to create a cohesive and comprehensive first-year experience for students, linking student development services with curricular offerings. Based on their proposed major, all incoming students are placed in one of three "academies" (Business/Technology, Allied Health, Liberal Arts). Functioning as a "school-within-a-school," each Academy offers themed basic skills courses linked with discipline-based courses (e.g., Basic Writing for Business paired with Introduction to Business). An Academy also includes a newly-developed career development course in the second semester and an array of co-curricular activities that contribute to student success and development. All courses are centered around the disciplines in each Academy (e.g., Career Orientation Events for health fields; Study Skills workshops utilizing health-related materials; speakers from the health professions). The FY Academy structure thus allows basic skills students to move more quickly toward substantial engagement with discipline-based courses, helping students perceive all first-year activities and courses as connected to their overall goal of obtaining a degree.

Outcomes: Although this program is in its pilot stages, the preliminary data are encouraging. Fall 2004 data showed that the FY Academy reduced the failure rate by 9%, the course attrition rate by 6%, and the semester-to-semester attrition rate by 6%. In addition, student ratings of their Academy experience on key questions from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement exceeded both the LaGuardia and national means. This year the Academy program received the “2005 Award for Innovation” from the Conference on Basic Writing, a national organization that recognizes innovative writing programs that improve the educational processes for basic writers through creative approaches.

Intensives. The College offers an array of free “pre-freshman” intensive courses in its “Quick Start” immersion program designed to accelerate first-year students through the basic skills course sequences. These skills courses also include a “Strategies for Success” component. Approximately 600 incoming students participate each year (in summer for the incoming fall class; in winter for the incoming spring cohort). Another intensive is “Second Chance,” a one-week course for students who “nearly pass” a basic skills course. Second Chance courses are designed to assist students in passing without having to retake the course for an entire semester. Students are only allowed into the Second Chance course when they are recommended by faculty.

Outcomes: “Quick Start” intensives have been highly successful at accelerating significant numbers of students through developmental courses, with over 2,200 students accelerated through one level of required developmental courses

over the 2000-04 period. Over the same period, “Second Chance” enabled over 1,000 students to pass a developmental course after a one-week intervention.

Common Reading. As an entry point to higher education for many students who might not otherwise have access, the College felt that establishing a common reading would create a shared intellectual experience that would immediately establish an academic tone for our new students and establish the fact that the ability to read critically is a key to their academic success. A faculty committee selects the book each year, chosen to be accessible to students in basic skills while also being rich enough in content to serve discipline-based classes. This year’s selection is Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*. All incoming students receive the book free-of-charge at registration. Faculty members are given a *gratis* copy as well. A small faculty team is compensated each year to create a website and study guide for the book, with links, ancillary resources, suggested assignments, and essay topics. A series of common reading events is also held each year, such as a visit by the author, films on related themes, and visits to relevant cultural sites in the metropolitan area. The common reading is also used as the basis for faculty-led discussions during Opening Sessions for New Students, giving students the opportunity to become acquainted with faculty in an informal setting while beginning their intellectual engagement with faculty and text.

Opening Sessions for New Students. Rather than inviting students to an orientation-type event that is focused on providing them information about registration, financial aid, and the like, Opening Sessions is designed to give new students a feel for what should be central to their college experience: engaging with faculty in the

world of ideas. To create this intellectual tone, the day is set up as an academic conference with a plenary session, concurrent workshops, and small-group colloquia with faculty members. Workshops are led by LaGuardia faculty and students on topics such as leadership, women's issues, communication, student clubs, student success stories, community activism, and diversity. Each year thirty to forty faculty members have volunteered to lead the colloquia, which are small-group discussion sessions on the common reading. Students consistently rate these faculty-led discussions as the most significant part of the day.

Mentoring. LaGuardia's mentoring program was launched to help foster social integration and involvement in the academic community. Mentors are asked to assist students in finding their way through the system and are trained on how to connect students with support services on campus. Advanced students who wish to become peer mentors for new students are first required either to take a multi-session training seminar or a credit-bearing course entitled "Mentoring: The Helping Relationship." Students who successfully complete the training become paid peer mentors, and receive additional training and supervision from the directors of the mentoring program. Approximately 500 students a year are mentored. A new aspect of the program is the Corporate Mentoring/Tutoring Program, a partnership with Citibank designed to provide first-year students with career mentoring and tutoring services in accounting, mathematics and writing.

Outcomes: Initial assessments on the College's newer initiatives (Opening Sessions for New Students, Common Reading, and Mentoring) have indicated a favorable student response to these projects. A study conducted on retention of

students who participated in the College's Opening Sessions or Mentoring Program showed that year-to-year retention was approximately 8% higher for students who attended Opening Sessions and 5% for those mentored. Since the College periodically administers the ACT Student Opinion Survey, LaGuardia has been able to compare the responses of participating students on a number of questions to the responses of non-participating students. Students who participate consistently rate the College higher on "assistance provided when entering the college," "concern for you as an individual," and "[quality of] the college in general."

eTransfer/Virtual Interest Groups. With the goal of improving transfer rates, LaGuardia has developed a unique "eTransfer" program with FIPSE funding. eTransfer is designed to assist students in clarifying their educational and career goals, as well as preparing for transfer to senior colleges. Virtual Interest Groups (VIGs) are the centerpiece of the program. Innovatively employing digital technologies in the advisement process, VIGs are essentially asynchronous online seminars attached to key courses. Participation in a VIG becomes a requirement in these courses and is counted in the grading standards. The VIGs are led by faculty members and former LaGuardia students who have successfully transferred to senior colleges. Using assignments, online discussion, and faculty feedback, the VIGs help students explore possible career fields and issues relating to transfer. eTransfer also provides online access to an array of information, including available scholarships and services designed to help students prepare for transfer.

Outcomes:

- **Thirty percent of graduating eTransfer participants received scholarships to senior colleges.**
- **Pre-post student surveys indicate that students' knowledge of career options increased significantly; pre-VIG, 23% of students indicated they had an understanding of career preparation, 21% had a knowledge of daily tasks in selected careers, and 38% had an understanding of educational requirements for a particular career. Post-VIG, these percentages increased to 60%, 65%, and 80%, respectively.**
- **The percentage of students who knew how credits may be transferred to a senior college increased from 43% to 70%.**
- **There was a 140% increase in the use of the Office for Transfer Services and a similar increase in the use of the Office for Transfer Services website (a monthly average of 3,600 hits) during the first three years of the program.**
- **The representation of colleges at LaGuardia's Transfer Fair increased from 15 participating senior colleges to approximately 70 senior colleges, and student attendance at these Fairs increased from 200-300 students to almost 1,000.**

Leadership and Diversity. Launched in 2003, this program offers students training in leadership skills, personal development, and diversity awareness. Through workshops and events that engage students with faculty, staff, and peers outside the classroom, the program allows students to apply their classroom knowledge, build a support network within the College community,

and deepen their engagement with the academic and social life of the College. Workshops and events last year included Identity & Perception, Leadership Exploration & Development, Culture & Communication, Communicating Across Difference, Values, Ethics, & Morals, and Becoming a Campus Leader.

Outcomes: Initial student response has been highly favorable, with 681 students signing up for 18 workshops and events in the 2004-05 academic year. **Black Male Empowerment and Cooperative Program (BMEC).** This new initiative is a comprehensive retention program targeting male students of color, with a strong emphasis on academic success and student engagement. BMEC is a collaborative initiative between academic and student support service programs, offering a network of faculty, staff and peers in a supportive learning environment through its Early Alert and Mentoring programs. Early Alert is an academic intervention program that notifies students each semester if they are at risk for failing one or more courses. Students then work with faculty and staff to identify strategic options for their academic success (e.g., tutoring, personal or academic counseling, career counseling). The Mentoring Program matches mentors and students based on their interests. Mentors are given two days of comprehensive training to help them create effective learning environments, as well as understand their role as mentors. Mentors are encouraged to focus on interpersonal support, guidance, mutual exchange, sharing of wisdom, coaching, and role modeling.

The BMEC Program also offers opportunities for “Real Talk” sessions in which students can talk about real-life issues that may be having an impact on their ability to stay in college and to focus on their studies. The goal is to enhance those

experiences that involve, engage and connect students to the College. The BMEC Program helps students navigate their academic lives while integrating their personal needs, wants, and expectations. Students have the opportunity for civic, career, and personal growth and for leadership.

Outcomes: Initial data on the pilot program has been extremely positive.

- The Black male retention rate for Fall 03 to Spring 04 rose 4.5% from 77.4% to 81.9%.
- The Spring 2004 Black male student (pilot) cohort (n=13), or 10% of new Black male students (n=121), had a 62% retention rate after one year compared to 56% for the total Black male student population.

Tutoring. A wide range of tutoring services are offered at the college. In addition to the required tutorial hours attached to all basic skills courses, a highly successful “supplemental instruction” (peer tutoring) program is offered to students in key “high-risk” courses across the disciplines, with over 1,000 students a year participating. With Allied Health majors being the most in-demand programs on the campus, and the most difficult to get into, the College has also created a “Science Study Hall” to provide tutoring in the key biology courses required for admission to these majors.

Outcomes: Ten years of data on supplemental instruction show that participating students earn an average of one full letter grade higher in high-risk courses such as Chemistry, Philosophy, Statistics, and Computer Science than students who have not participated. Similarly, students using the Science Study

Hall receive, on average, almost one full letter grade higher in their biology courses than non-users.

Financial Support. In 2003, the College established a Foundation Board for the first time in its history. The new Foundation made raising scholarship money for students its major priority, which was particularly appropriate given that the University had just determined that international students could no longer receive financial aid.

LaGuardia is also aggressive in pursuing grant-based scholarships, last year having been awarded \$400,000 in scholarship monies from the National Science Foundation. The Student Financial Services office is proactive in gathering and disseminating information about available scholarships and has created its own website with scholarship information and online applications.

Outcomes: In September 2003, the Foundation awarded its first 15 scholarships. For 2004, it was able to increase the number to 35. For the calendar year 2005, the Foundation expects to support 90 students with scholarship assistance.

III. High Quality and Flexible Instructional Programs to Meet Student Needs

Quality Instruction through Assessment and Faculty Development. LaGuardia is committed to enhancing its instruction through a rigorous program of outcomes assessment and professional development for faculty. The core of its general education program is a series of competencies required in each and every major:

1) written communication, 2) critical thinking, 3) critical reading, 4) quantitative reasoning, 5) oral communication, 6) research and information literacy, and 7) technological literacy.

In establishing these general education core competencies, the faculty have recognized their responsibility to reinforce these competencies within each particular discipline as part of an across-the-curriculum approach. Thus, core competencies are introduced in the First-Year Academies, linking basic skills and introductory courses whenever possible, and are then reinforced and assessed in the discipline areas. To ensure that these competencies are being systematically assessed, an outcomes assessment plan is in the early stages of implementation. Electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) are developed by all students. This collection of work spanning the entire length of their academic careers at LaGuardia is then assessed using faculty-developed rubrics for each competency. Assessment results form the basis for program improvement, pedagogical enhancements, and curriculum revision.

To support the faculty as they refine their pedagogy and foster development of these competencies, the College created a Center for Teaching and Learning in 2000. To date, faculty professional development programs have been offered in writing-, critical reading- and critical thinking- across-the-curriculum. Another key professional development initiative has focused on technology. The Designed for Learning (DFL) program has trained over 130 faculty to develop technology-based pedagogies in three main areas: student inquiry with content-rich web resources that lead to critical thinking activities; structured online writing tasks designed to

help students gain greater fluency in language and literacy as they deepen their understanding of course content; and project-based assignments where students create web pages and multimedia presentations with text, images, design, and sound. Faculty report that these approaches increase student motivation because they encourage independence, flexibility, and ownership of the learning process.

Outcomes:

- **DFL courses (that is, technology-enhanced courses taught by faculty who participated in the DFL professional development program) show a reduction of nearly 20% in the rate at which LaGuardia students drop out of courses. So far, more than 250 courses have been revised to incorporate digital technologies.**
- **As measured by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, students in DFL courses consistently show gains of over a half point on such indicators of student engagement as synthesizing information, building writing skills, learning to work effectively with others, and analytical thinking.**
- **In 2004, the DFL program was showcased as LaGuardia was honored with a Theodore M. Hesburgh Award Certificate of Excellence, presented each year to colleges judged to have the most effective programs for enhancing undergraduate teaching and learning.**
- **The pass rate on the University's College Proficiency Exam (required for graduation) for students who took writing-, reading-, or critical thinking-**

across-the-curriculum courses in Spring 2004 ranged from 85% to 91%, compared to the College's overall pass rate of 80%.

ePortfolio. LaGuardia's ePortfolio initiative provides students with a tool for collecting their academic work and their reflections on their learning, and for sharing their portfolios on the Internet. Students begin depositing work in their ePortfolios during the First-Year Academies and continually refine their presentations as they move forward, each time looking to reflect on and understand the process of growth and improvement. Students have integrated original paintings, drawings, oral interviews, family photographs, poetry, annotated resumes, and a range of class projects that represent who they are as students and emerging scholars. Designed to help students connect classroom, career, and personal goals and experiences, the ePortfolio moves students toward, not only integrated learning, but also more integrated lives. ePortfolios prompt students to take more responsibility for their learning, while also providing faculty with snapshots of student growth that can help them better understand individual students, as well as the broader process of learning and teaching. At the institutional level, the ePortfolio also lays important groundwork for a more holistic outcomes assessment process that examines student work as a way of identifying and pursuing possibilities for improved instruction.

Outcomes: Although LaGuardia only has a three-year history with the ePortfolio project, two thousand students are already actively building their ePortfolios (with the eventual goal of reaching all students). Feedback shows that

students are enthusiastic about this opportunity to learn new technology skills, and are particularly interested in using it to connect classroom and life experiences.

- Students who have developed an ePortfolio score higher than both the LaGuardia and national means on a number of key indicators on the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, including synthesizing ideas, writing, working effectively with others, and making judgments about the soundness of information, arguments or methods.
- Students who have developed their ePortfolios rank the College higher on a number of indicators on the ACT Opinion Survey, including quality of instruction, whether they would advise a friend to attend LaGuardia, and whether they would choose to attend LaGuardia if they could start college over.

Adult and Continuing Education (ACE). The College provides quality instruction for approximately 39,000 continuing education students in addition to its matriculated students. ACE offers a wide variety of programs that reflect the diversity of adult, family, community and business needs in the surrounding area. For many, Adult and Continuing Education means the opportunity to resume an education interrupted or denied. Two thousand adults each year attend classes in high school equivalency preparation and adult basic education through the Adult Learning Center. For others, it is the chance to learn the latest skills demanded in the workplace or gain the essential skills required for employment - from certified home health aide to computer repair, from construction management to medical records specialist, from nurses' aide to emergency medical technician. All of these

programs target underserved groups (e.g., those unemployed or working in low-level jobs, low-income minorities, out-of-school youth). Given the demographics of Queens, ACE has focused particular attention on opening the first doors of opportunity for our immigrant community. The English Language Center (TELC) is the largest ESL program in the New York City metropolitan area, serving approximately 7,000 students a year with courses that prepare for college, careers or the TOEFL exam. Serving 500 students in its first year, the Center for Immigrant Education and Training offers free educational and job training services, including ESL, civics classes that aim to help adult immigrants become effective participants in society, vocational job training programs to help those with limited English proficiency succeed in an English-speaking work environment, and a family literacy program to support parental involvement in their children's schooling. The English Language Immersion Program allows lower-level ESL students accepted into LaGuardia degree programs the chance to defer their enrollment in order to concentrate on their English studies, thus enabling them to save their financial aid for future undergraduate study; 40% of students in this program advance to matriculated status within CUNY. To increase still further the number of continuing education students who enter degree programs, the College Prep Program was created in 2001 to provide information, advisement and career development services to prospective students; to date, 43% of participating students have matriculated within CUNY.

IV. Smooth Transitions from High Schools and Secondary Programs

LaGuardia has been a national leader in establishing innovative approaches to secondary education that promote success and entry into higher education for traditionally underserved groups. Two on-campus high schools have served as national models; more recently, the College has taken a lead role in developing early college high schools across the country. In addition, LaGuardia’s “College Now” program has served to enhance the success of thousands of students entering CUNY from the city’s high schools.

International High School. Opened in 1985, LaGuardia’s International High School was founded to provide quality public education for recently-arrived immigrants who are English language learners (ELL). Based on our highly successful model, five other International schools serving this population have opened throughout New York City, with an additional two in the planning stages. LaGuardia’s International High School and its replications have a distinguished record of service to our city’s new immigrants with strong graduation, attendance, and college acceptance rates.

Outcomes:

- International High Schools have a 65% four-year graduation rate compared to 33% for the ELL population in New York City and 52% for the general New York City high school population.

- **Internationals have an average drop-out rate of 5% compared to 26% for ELLs in other New York City high schools and 16% for the general New York City high school population.**
- **92% of graduates from Internationals plan to attend college compared to 72% of students in the United States and 67% in New York City.**

Middle College High School. Middle College High School was the first New York City high school/college collaboration created to serve an “at-risk” student population with the potential for college. The school has earned numerous awards and citations, including those from the Carnegie Foundation, the National Commission on Excellence in Education, the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, and the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1996 the Middle College High School was selected as a “21st Century School” by the New York State Department of Education.

Middle College invites students who have been unsuccessful in traditional settings to attend school on LaGuardia’s campus. At LaGuardia, they meet successful college-age students who act as role models, follow a solid academic curriculum, receive guidance and counseling support, take part in career exploration and internships, and prepare for the responsibilities and opportunities associated with college and work. Since its opening, this high school/college collaboration has become the model for 28 other middle colleges located in New York City and throughout the country.

Outcomes: 62% of Middle College students graduate high school in four years compared to 52% for the general New York City high school population; 97% of graduates are accepted into college.

EXCEL Early College Program. Funded by a \$7.6 million Gates Foundation grant, LaGuardia has been designated the lead institution in creating dual enrollment, “early college” high schools across the country that allow at-risk students to earn both a high school diploma and associate degree in five years. LaGuardia’s own early college program, started in 2002, features a learning community approach, with a “college coach” assigned to guide, tutor, and mentor each cohort of students.

Outcomes: Graduation rates cannot yet be assessed, as LaGuardia’s initial student cohort is still in attendance. As of April 2005, this group was making excellent progress: the mean for credits earned was 45; the mean college GPA was 2.89.

College Now Program. The College Now program at LaGuardia offers high school students the opportunity to take college-level courses in a variety of disciplines. The program also provides an array of enrichment activities and specialized workshops. Offered in thirteen partner high schools in Queens, LaGuardia’s program serves approximately 3,000 students a year.

Outcomes: CUNY students who participated in LaGuardia’s College Now program have a first-year retention rate of 73% (Fall 2003 cohort) after two semesters. The cumulative GPA for CUNY students who earlier participated in LaGuardia’s College Now program exceeds that of non-participants by .25 (Fall 2002 cohort).

V. Institutional Commitment

Presidential and administrative support is critical in launching and sustaining any large-scale project. At LaGuardia, the President ensures that instructional and academic support initiatives, such as First-Year Academies and ePortfolios, are made prominent in the College’s Strategic Plan, prioritizes funding in accordance with the plan, and regularly reports on the progress of these projects in her addresses to various College groups. The President and high-level administrators demonstrate their commitment to these programs by being active participants; they often address the new students and lead discussion groups at Opening Sessions and become mentors in the Mentoring Program.

LaGuardia provides consistent institutional support for its key initiatives. For example, while initially established through a Title V grant, the Center for Teaching and Learning has subsequently been institutionalized through the creation of “tax-levy” lines for six full-time staff members who support faculty professional development, program improvement, and the ePortfolio project. An Office of Academic Support Services has been established. To launch the First-Year Academies, four new positions (Academy Coordinators) were created. Ninety percent of the “Supplemental Academic Funding” received from the University has been channeled into developing programs for first-year students. To support the writing-across-the-curriculum program, class sizes were lowered. To establish more aggressive outreach and recruitment to underserved populations, the College created a

new Executive Director of Marketing position; to create a Foundation for securing student scholarships, a new Executive Director for Advancement position was funded.

Providing our students with the highest level of quality education we can – with the education they deserve – is the core of our mission. The innovative and comprehensive programs outlined in this proposal, backed by institutional commitment and resources, have enabled LaGuardia to achieve impressive outcomes:

- **LaGuardia’s five-year graduation rate of 26% exceeds the national community college norm of 17.3% (Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics).**
- **LaGuardia’s average one-year retention rate is 63.8%, exceeding the national average of 58% (Source: NCES).**
- **In 2004, LaGuardia was in the top 25 of all community colleges nationally for degrees granted to Hispanics and 4th in the northeast (Source: Community College Week).**
- **In 2004, LaGuardia was in the top 25 of all community colleges nationally for degrees granted to minorities and 7th in the northeast (Source: Community College Week).**
- **During the 2002-03 academic year, LaGuardia was one of only 13 colleges nationwide to be recognized as an “Institution of Excellence in the First College Year” by the Policy Center on the First Year of College and was subsequently featured in the Center’s publication, *Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College* (Jossey-Bass, 2005).**