Chapter 1
Standard 1: Mission and Goals

Standard 1: Mission and Goals
“*The institution’s mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution’s stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body and are utilized to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.*” (Characteristics of Excellence 1)

Introductory Overview of Standard 1: Mission and Goals
Consistent with the Fundamental Elements for Standard 1, LaGuardia Community College’s mission and goals have been developed through collaborative participation and approved through a formal process (FE 1.1). (Sentences and phrases that have been bolded have been taken directly from Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education.) The mission statement adopted in April 2000 (01.1.06 2002 LaGCC Middle States Self-Study, p.21) was developed through a participatory process involving all college constituencies (01.1.16 2000 Mission Creation Process). The 2000 mission statement grew out of the 1992 statement (01.2.09 1992 Mission), which emphasized the dual mission of supporting both “students who want to transfer to four-year colleges as well as those who seek immediate employment.” (01.2.07 1975 Mission).

LaGuardia’s 2000 mission statement is the fourth in a series of updated missions since 1975 (See Appendix 1.0). This statement prioritizes the College’s commitment to provide a diverse student population with access to higher education through a large range of educational offerings. The mission also emphasizes the importance of a highly qualified faculty and staff, the assessment of academic programs, strong support for student success, and productive relationships with the local community.

The self-study Working Group for Standard 1 examined how the mission statement guides planning and decision making in academic and administrative areas, including both internal initiatives and external opportunities. It also questioned whether the College has a process for reviewing its mission and goals, how well-informed the College’s constituencies are of its mission and goals, how the mission and goals support professional development, and how the mission enables the College to adapt to changes in the external environment.

Findings for Standard 1: Mission and Goals
We found that LaGuardia is in compliance with the Middle States Commission’s expectation that the College have a clearly defined mission and goals that guide faculty, administration, staff and governing bodies in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program and curriculum development, and definition of program outcomes (FE 1.1). Planning and decision-making are driven by the annual Strategic Planning process and the Strategic Directions agreed upon at the College’s 2009 Vision Summit.
LaGuardia’s annual Strategic Planning process, initiated in 2006, guides all college activities. In the Plan each college target corresponds to CUNY Goals. CUNY’s Performance Management Process (PMP) then evaluates how well the College achieves its targets (02.1.02 CUNY Goals Progress Reports). CUNY’s PMP process embeds self-assessment into annual strategic planning for CUNY colleges; however, at no point does the process require attention to the College’s mission statement. (For the College’s strategic planning process see Chapter 2).

Our research also confirmed that the College’s institutional goals are consistent with its mission (FE 1.3), as expected by Middle States. Although the text of the mission statement is not regularly cited in the Strategic Plan or Vision Summits, the Working Group did not identify any instance in which the College’s goals were inconsistent with the 2000 mission statement. For example, the following goals from the 2008-09 Strategic Plan (01.01.05 Strategic Plan) have clear linkages to the 2000 mission statement: Increase on-campus employment for students by increasing the number of student college assistants and peer advisors; increase enrollment of underrepresented groups in new academic programs, including minority males, international (F-visa) and adult students 25 and over; create a Sustainability Committee and implement a validated plan; and, solidify program offerings and identify full funding for NY Designs and the Small Business Development Center. All of these goals are consistent with the 2000 mission statement.

In addition, we found that the mission statement is publicized and known by a substantial portion of the college community (FE 1.1). Since 2002, the College has included the mission statement in the catalog and the mission statement is posted on the LaGuardia website (01.1.03 Mission Statement). Even so, questions emerged during the self-study about how well the mission guides decision-making processes on campus. Opinions varied from an affirmative response to ignorance about the mission’s content. This lack of consistency across campus prompted a recommendation from the Standard 1 Working Group to survey all constituencies to ascertain their familiarity with and use of the mission statement in their daily work at LaGuardia.

In March 2011, faculty, staff, and students were surveyed on topics relevant to the research of several working groups. Six questions for faculty and staff addressed the mission, while one question asked students whether they were familiar with the mission statement (10.09.08 Faculty and Staff Survey Results.xls and 01.03.03 Student Survey Results).

A significant majority of the full and part-time faculty and staff reported having seen the mission statement, while only about one-third of the students in the aggregate had seen it (01.03.03 Student Survey Results). More than half of the full and part-time faculty and staff reported finding the mission on their own, while slightly less than half were introduced to it at orientation or by another colleague. Approximately one-half of the full and part-time faculty and staff reported referring to the mission in their work at the College at any time. Less than half of the full and part-time faculty and staff think the majority of their colleagues are implicitly aware of the College’s mission, while slightly more than half feel the mission is being taken into account as the College plans for the future (10.09.08 Faculty and Staff Survey Results.xls). In an effort to respond to these mixed results, the formal process for reviewing the mission (see Appendix 1.1) includes plans for improving the dissemination of the mission statement.
As expected by Middle States, the College’s mission and goals include support of scholarly and creative activity (FE 1.1). The 2000 mission statement includes a commitment to “maintaining a dedicated, highly qualified faculty and staff, while promoting their professional development” (Appendix 1.0). Support for developing scholarly and creative projects has blossomed since 2002 and is demonstrated by strategic plan targets. Each year since 2007-08 strategic plans have supported CUNY’s commitment to become a “research-intensive institution” and to “draw greater recognition for academic quality” (05.1.47 Strat Plan Targets 2010-11, 05.1.48 Strat Plan Targets 2009-10, 05.1.49 Strat Plan Targets 2008-09, 05.1.50 Strat Plan Targets 2007-08). LaGuardia’s 2010-11 Strategic Plan includes six targets to “attract and nurture a strong faculty that is recognized for excellent teaching, scholarship, and creative activity.” Related targets are described in Appendix 1.2.

Further, we determined that the College’s mission and goals relate to external as well as internal contexts and constituencies (FE 1.2). LaGuardia’s 2000 mission statement calls on the College to “[respond] creatively to changes in student population, technology and the global economy.” In recent years there have been numerous instances in which the College has addressed shifts in student needs, integrated new technologies for pedagogy and communication, and addressed global and local economic issues. Implemented across different College divisions, these initiatives demonstrate the College’s commitment to serving its local constituencies.

Chapter 6 examines how the College has addressed the needs of a changing student population through a robust curriculum development process, resulting in the creation of eleven new academic programs since 2007. Another example of responding to changing constituencies is LaGuardia’s participation in the Ford Foundation’s “Difficult Dialogues” project in 2006-07, where the College fostered conversation about religious diversity within classes and at local venues in many Queens communities, opening dialog among distinct communities and helping educators gain communication skills (01.5.26 Difficult Dialogues).

Since 2007, the College has responded to the dramatic changes in communication technologies by using social networking and text messaging for outreach to students and as pedagogical tools. The use of ePortfolios and Teaching and Learning Networks is discussed in Chapter 8, and the Bursar’s text messaging program is discussed in Chapter 4.

Major shifts have also taken place in the U.S. and global economies as the continuing economic crisis affects markets, housing, and employment. Community colleges play an important role in the response to these economic challenges, and, in keeping with its mission, LaGuardia’s Adult and Continuing Education division (ACE) has responded quickly and creatively by improving its ability to meet student and community needs, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 2 (Standards 2 and 7) and Chapter 8 (Standards 12 and 14) demonstrate how the College’s goals focus on student learning, other outcomes, and institutional improvement (FE 1.4).

Finally, the Standard 1 Working Group, noting that the 2002 Middle States report suggested a review of the mission statement, recommended to the President and Executive Council that this task should be undertaken. As a result, participants in the strategic planning process included a
review of the mission statement in the 2010-11 Strategic Plan (01.1.05 Strategic Plan). The President endorsed institutionalizing a formal process for the periodic evaluation of the mission statement (FE 1.1) and committed to integrating the mission statement with the strategic planning process and communicating the statement to the college community. The process, delineated in Appendix 1.1, ensures that the mission statement is revised through collaborative participation (FE 1.1), consistent with Middle States standards.

The President appointed a committee comprised of faculty, staff and a student to consult with the college community and draft a revised mission statement (01.1.19 Draft Mission Statement). In order to stimulate responses from the college community, the committee asked, “In two words, what does LaGuardia Community College mean to you?” At spring 2011 Opening Sessions, faculty and staff texted their words to a polling website and additional constituent responses were gathered via student club fairs, word boards, emails to the ACE job bank database, the library checkout desk, and classroom surveys. Approximately 2,200 words were gathered over the course of one month and those which repeated most often formed the basis for the first draft of the mission statement, which was shared with the College Senate, Student Government Association, and the larger college community for review and recommendations, including a presentation at the June 2011 Professional Staff Meeting. Based on constituent feedback, the Mission Committee made further revisions and submitted the final text to the President and Executive Council, who approved the new mission statement shared with the College in September 2011:

LaGuardia Community College’s mission is to educate and graduate one of the most diverse student populations in the country to become critical thinkers and socially responsible citizens who help to shape a rapidly evolving society.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions for Standard 1
1. LaGuardia’s mission statement describes the College’s core values and commitments and is well-embedded in key planning and decision-making processes, although it is not always explicitly referenced.
2. The goals articulated in the College’s recent strategic plans are consistent with the mission’s commitment to the professional development of the faculty and include support for scholarly and creative projects. In addition, in keeping with its mission, the College responds to changes in student needs and successfully pursues external opportunities.
3. After an inclusive, campus-wide process beginning in spring 2011, LaGuardia adopted a new mission statement that embraces the values and aspirations of the institution.
4. The process for reviewing the mission adopted by the College in spring 2011 includes plans for improving the dissemination of the mission and a periodic review of the mission statement every five years.

Recommendations for Standard 1
1. The College should implement its plans for disseminating the Mission and Goals throughout the campus. Some suggested methods are shown in Appendix 1.3.
2. When developing goals for annual college targets in the Strategic Plan, divisions and departments should demonstrate how their initiatives support the College’s mission.