Chapter 5
Standard 10: Faculty

Standard 10: Faculty
“The institution’s instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals” (Characteristics of Excellence 37).

Introductory Overview of Standard 10: Faculty
LaGuardia Community College has benefited from the consistent and substantial growth of the faculty over an eight-year period. Between 2002 and 2010, the number of full-time and adjunct faculty increased by 49%, from 755 to 1128. The number of full-time faculty increased 44% (from 231 to 333), while the number of adjunct faculty increased 52% (from 524 to 795). The total number of adjunct faculty hired (271) is more than double the number of full-time faculty hired (102) for the same time period. Even though the College has devoted significant resources to hiring full-time faculty, the ratio of full-timers to part-timers has increased slightly from 1:2.27 in 2002 to 1:2.39 in 2010 (10.02.06 Faculty Report). These numbers demonstrate that part-time faculty play a crucial role at LaGuardia and that it is essential that they are well qualified, supported, and fairly evaluated. Appendix 5.1 provides more details about the growth of the faculty.

The LaGuardia faculty is also distinguished by an exceptionally high level of educational qualifications when compared with national benchmarks for community colleges. In 2010, 54.4% of full-time faculty hired had a doctoral degree, an increase from 45.5% in 2002. This compares to 19% of full-time community college faculty nationwide holding a doctoral degree (10.02.10 College Hires 31 Faculty). In the same year, 94.3% of the College’s full-time faculty held at least a master’s degree, as compared to 80-85% nationwide. Moreover, in 2010, 76.2% of part-time faculty held at least a master’s degree, as compared to 67.1% nationwide (see Appendix 5.2).

The data on faculty diversity demonstrates that the hiring process has helped the College achieve greater faculty diversity, though room remains for improvement, particularly in terms of the faculty-to-student ratio among Hispanics. Between 2002 and 2010, faculty members identified as Asian and Pacific Islander increased from 70 to 88; Black Non-Hispanic from 123 to 191; and Hispanic Non-Puerto Rican from 37 to 131. The group with the most lopsided faculty-to-student ratio, Hispanic Non-Puerto Rican, saw that ratio reduced dramatically, from 1:118 to 1:47. (This compares with a ratio of 1:2 for White Non-Hispanics.) Ratios for Asian or Pacific Islanders and Black Non-Hispanics fell less, from 1:28 to 1:23 and from 1:15 to 1:13 respectively (see Appendix 5.3).

Faculty members have produced an impressive quantity and range of publications, conference papers, and creative works. Between 2006 and 2010, 580 items are listed in the annual bibliographies published by the President’s Office to celebrate the accomplishments of faculty and staff who have published books, articles, and literary works, and who have contributed to the worlds of art, music, theater and dance (10.09.02 2006 Faculty Accomplishments) (10.09.03 2007 Faculty Accomplishments) (10.09.04 2008 Faculty Accomplishments) (10.09.05 2009 Faculty Accomplishments) (10.09.06 Faculty Accomplishments). According to the Fall 2009 issue of Faculty and Staff Notes (10.09.01), over 75 faculty and staff presented 140 times at
conferences from coast to coast. The accomplishments of the faculty are evident in the numerous and prestigious grants that they have received. PSC CUNY Awards totaling $308,931.62 have been awarded to LaGuardia faculty from 2006 to 2010 (10.05.20 Grants Awarded 2006-Present). Through a Title V grant, with additional funds contributed from CUNY, the College constructed a faculty research laboratory, an unusual asset for a community college (10.05.36 Natural Science Research).

Based on the annual bibliographies generated by the President’s Office, the percentage of full-time faculty who published has increased from 11.2% in 2006-07 to 22% in 2010-11. It was therefore surprising that the CUNY PMP report on faculty scholarship for 2010-11 documented publications for only 15% of the LaGuardia faculty (CUNY PMP faculty report—documentation not yet available), especially since the CUNY report includes conference presentations, which are excluded from the President’s Office bibliographies. This discrepancy suggests that not all activity by LaGuardia faculty is being reported to CUNY. Currently, faculty receive at least three requests each year to report their professional activity, which may create confusion (President’s Office annual bibliography, Faculty and Staff Notes, and the CUNY scholarship report). The Standard 10 Working Group concluded that the College should develop a procedure for gathering accurate information on the professional activity of the faculty, including better communication with faculty so they understand the importance of reporting professional activity to CUNY.

The Standard 10 Working Group examined the procedures for evaluating full-time and adjunct faculty, how the College ensures faculty are appropriately qualified, whether teaching assessments promote teaching excellence and professional growth, the availability and effectiveness of professional development opportunities, whether these professional development activities help improve student outcomes, how the College supports faculty to provide academic advisement for students, the College’s support for academic freedom, and faculty opinions about the appropriate balance among teaching, scholarship, and service.

Findings for Standard 10: Faculty
Our research confirmed that LaGuardia’s hiring standards and procedures are fair, equitable and clearly articulated, ensuring that all faculty members are well qualified for their positions (FE 10.1). (Sentences and phrases that have been bolded have been taken directly from Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education.) Full-time faculty members are hired through a multi-step process managed through Human Resources and the Affirmative Action Office. These steps include resume review with the search committee; interview with the search committee; interview with the department chair, and interviews with the Vice President and President. At the completion of this process, the most qualified candidate is recommended for appointment. Although adjunct faculty are hired through an abbreviated version of this process, the Academic Chairs take steps to ensure that the criteria for appointing adjunct faculty are consistent with those for full-time faculty (FE 10.8). According to the Chairs, “the interview is crucial in order to determine that the [adjunct] candidate has the appropriate level of discipline expertise and teaching experience” (10.04.01 Academic Dept Chairs’ Response). See Appendix 5.4 for a detailed overview of the hiring process.

CUNY policies and the contractual agreement with the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) require that all members of the instructional staff are evaluated in order to maintain
academic and professional standards of excellence (FE 10.7). Evaluations encourage and provide direction for the improvement of performance and provide a basis for reappointment, promotion and tenure.

Both full-time and adjunct faculty undergo a three-prong evaluation, which includes the annual evaluation, peer observations, and student evaluations of faculty (SIRs). Librarians are evaluated on their area of primary responsibilities and teaching, and use peer observations and student evaluations only if they are teaching a credit-bearing course. Effective September 2006, the tenure clock was changed from 5 to 7 years as part of the collective bargaining agreement. The “March towards Tenure/CCE Calendar” (10.01.04 Tenure Track Table) explains the new tenure clock. In 2009, the annual performance evaluation form was expanded to include ten areas in which faculty would be evaluated (07.4.22 HR Annual Performance Evaluation for Faculty). The new form is more closely aligned with Article 18 of the PSC-CUNY contract (10.01.01 2002-2007 PSC Contract.pdf) (10.05.07 Observation Form). Evaluation of adjunct faculty is governed by Article 18.3 (c) of the PSC-CUNY contract, which stipulates that “after four semesters of service annual evaluation for adjunct personnel shall be held at the request of the chairperson or the adjunct.” Chairs inform HR in May and December whether adjuncts will be reappointed for the following fall or spring. After 6 semesters of consecutive appointments, adjuncts are eligible for annual appointment letters. Chairs rely heavily on peer observation reports to evaluate adjunct performance, since teaching is their only professional responsibility. The evaluation procedures for all members of the instructional staff, including Higher Education Officers (HEO) and College Laboratory Technicians (CLT), are summarized in Appendix 5.5.

We also found that the standards and procedures for evaluating full and part-time faculty, CLTs, and HEOs are clearly articulated (FE 10.6) in the PSC-CUNY contract and Instructional Staff Handbook. The January 2012 revision of the handbook is on the HR website, which HR updates as changes occur. Information about the evaluation process is also shared with the full-time faculty and staff at various forums, including the Employee Orientation for Instructional Staff conducted by HR. In addition, new faculty are invited to the annual Tenure and Promotion Forum, sponsored by Faculty Council, which features the Vice President for Academic Affairs, an academic chairperson, a recently promoted full professor, the Executive Director and Associate Director of HR, and a representative from the PSC, who also conveys information about the grievance appeal process. Grievance procedures are also published on the website of the College’s Labor and Legal Affairs Office (10.01.02 CUNY Legal Affairs Website). Individual evaluation conferences with the chair, supervisor, or director also deliver information about the evaluation process. Finally, managers of HEO staff are invited to attend the HEO Performance Management Workshop sponsored by HR.

New adjunct faculty are encouraged to consult the Adjunct Staff handbook available on the HR website for policies and procedures regarding appointments, evaluations and promotions. However, less information about the evaluation process is shared with adjunct faculty as is shared with full-time faculty since there is no formal college-wide orientation process for part-time staff. Mentors play an important though perhaps informal role in conveying what is expected to succeed, although mentors are not uniformly deployed across the College. Articulation of standards depends upon individual chairs and departmental orientation processes.
Given the large percentage of courses taught by part-time faculty, in 2010 IR&A studied the effectiveness of teaching by part-time faculty (10.03.01 Full v Part-time faculty teaching dev courses). The study examines pass rates for 15,296 students in basic skills courses from fall 2006 through fall 2009. Forty-six full-time and 59 part-time faculty members were included in the sample. The study revealed no significant or consistent difference in class and test pass rates between full-time and part-time faculty (See Appendix 5.6). Even so, the Academic Chairs would like the College to provide funding for part-time faculty to attend professional development workshops in order to further strengthen adjunct teaching (10.04.01 Academic Dept Chairs’ Response).

Further, we determined that the procedures and criteria for reviewing all individuals responsible for the College’s educational program are carefully articulated, equitable, and implemented (FE 10.7), as expected by Middle States. In particular, the Standard 10 Working Group examined peer observations and student evaluations of faculty (SIRs), the two instruments used by the College to measure teaching effectiveness and provide guidance to faculty for improving their teaching. Appendix 5.5 provides the details of administering SIRs and peer observations. The Academic Chairs view peer observations as “very effective, especially when guided by the Chairs in order to insure fairness, objectivity and rigor” (10.04.01 Academic Dept Chairs’ Response). The Self-Study survey reveals that on the whole the faculty also consider these observations effective. Among full-time faculty, only 9.7% of respondents rated peer observations as “not effective,” while only 1.7% of responding adjunct faculty rated them not effective (10.09.08 Faculty Responses to Survey). Regarding the SIR reports, the Chairs stated that the ability to discern consistency and patterns is the main benefit of using SIRs in assessing teaching: “Reports that are out of character and so likely anomalies receive less credence than do consistent assessments over a period of time.” Chairs also point to possible limitations of the SIRs in that students may not always take them seriously or may let the difficulty of the course material or rigorous grading affect their responses (10.04.01 Academic Dept Chairs’ Response). The Self-Study survey also revealed a significant amount of faculty skepticism regarding the value of SIRs. Concerns include the subjective nature of the questions, the possibility that the results reflect popularity rather than teaching effectiveness, and the limits of the multiple choice format. Among full-time faculty members, 30.1% rated SIRs as very effective or effective in improving teaching, while 41.3% rated them somewhat effective and 28.6% as not effective. Among part-time faculty members, 36.9% rated them very effective or effective, 43.9% as somewhat effective and 19.3% as not effective (10.09.08 Faculty Responses to Survey). Overall, however, the Chairs believe that the current methods of evaluating teaching help them identify and assist faculty members who may need to improve their teaching technique.

In addition, we found that the College makes an extensive array of professional development opportunities available to both full-time and part-time faculty (FE 10.4). This is reflected in the strong ratings the college received on two questions in the 2009 University Faculty Senate (UFS) Survey. Among the 19 CUNY campuses surveyed, LaGuardia received the highest rating from full-time faculty (74% good or excellent) and seventh-highest from part-time faculty (51% good or excellent) on the availability of faculty development activities. The College was also rated second-highest by both full-time (71% mildly or strongly agreed) and part-time faculty (77% mildly or strongly agreed) for helping them improve the quality of their teaching (05.3.05 FES).
Faculty development provided through the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) includes numerous faculty-led programs designed to advance innovative teaching for full-time and part-time faculty and other teaching professionals. The Center’s programs focus on structural innovations such as learning communities and the use of digital technologies, pedagogies such as inquiry learning, and the building of student academic competencies. To reflect LaGuardia’s growing engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning, in 2005 the CTL launched the journal In Transit for faculty to share their pedagogy and practice, and it runs two programs that support faculty scholarship: the Carnegie Seminar on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, and the Faculty Scholarship and Publication Workshop. The CTL provides a large amount of fiscal support for faculty participation in professional development. In 2009-10, grants written and administered by the CTL provided close to $500,000 in reassigned time to faculty, plus approximately $150,000 in stipends. Appendix 5.7 provides highlights of CTL programs and accomplishments.

The CTL plays a key role in supporting and documenting the faculty’s excellence in teaching and professional growth by collecting evidence of success of faculty seminars and programs, faculty learning, and improvement of their pedagogical practices, as well as student success rates from classes taught by faculty in CTL seminars. Based on the CTL’s data, professional development for faculty, especially those that focus on pedagogy, has had a positive impact on student learning outcomes, as detailed in Appendix 5.8.

In addition to the CTL, the College provides support for faculty professional development through the Publication and Tenure Highway to Success Program (PATH); library workshops to broaden information literacy; the Grants Office; workshops organized within academic departments; the EDIT grant program, which provided $70,904 between spring 2007 and 2010 to support faculty scholarship; and the Faculty Research Colloquium sponsored by the College Senate Committee on Professional Development. Launched in 2009 by Human Resources for tenure-track faculty, PATH was created to help meet the CUNY goal to raise academic quality by increasing faculty scholarship; evaluation data has been overwhelmingly positive. Other sources of faculty development include institutional support for travel to conferences, sabbaticals, and the contractually negotiated 24 hours of reassigned time for new tenure-track faculty for conducting scholarly activities.

The faculty also receives an increasing amount of support from the College to provide academic advisement that helps students plan, execute, and realize their academic and professional goals. Academic Support Services (ASS) provides DegreeWorks Training for faculty, then collects and analyzes feedback from participants. These training sessions are well attended by full-time faculty, who were overwhelmingly satisfied. ASS also encourages faculty participation in College-Wide Advising Days and analyzes faculty feedback. The AAS Director, the Executive Director of the Center for Counseling, Advising and Academic Support, and the ASAP Director have developed an award-winning faculty development seminar called the Art of Advising, which has also been highly rated by faculty.
In addition to the AAS, the Developmental Advising Committee focuses on improving advisement through faculty and staff collaboration using a developmental advising model. Finally, the College has established the Advising Central website to support faculty and staff. Appendix 5.11 provides data on faculty participation.

The standards and procedures for evaluating faculty demonstrate that the College recognizes appropriate linkages among scholarship, teaching, student learning, research, and service (FE 10.5). However, two recent surveys indicate that the extent of faculty workload is a concern for a substantial portion of the faculty. In the 2009 UFS Survey, among 19 CUNY institutions LaGuardia ranked 16th in “Satisfaction with Workload,” with 54% dissatisfied, 7% neutral, and 39% satisfied (05.3.05 FES, Appendix B, Table 28).

The results of the Self-Study Faculty and Staff Survey echo this concern with workload (10.09.07 Text Responses Faculty Survey). Full-time faculty were asked to respond to the following question: “What is the appropriate balance among teaching, scholarship, and service for the LaGuardia Community College faculty?” Of the 220 faculty who participated in the survey, 161 contributed written comments. Of these responses, 55.9% clearly indicate dissatisfaction with their perception of the College’s expectations of faculty in these three areas. The remaining responses refrain from any direct expression of dissatisfaction. Some simply offer a percentage breakdown as to how faculty time should be divided, while others describe at more length an ideal distribution among the three areas without commenting on the existing situation at the College. Overall, the comments show that the LaGuardia faculty value teaching as central to their professional lives; many faculty consider teaching the most important element of the workload, or that it takes the most time. Allocation of time to teaching ranged from 33% to 90% with many variations in between. One respondent wrote, “Teaching at the community college level requires more involvement and planning on the part of faculty. . . Even though I favor a healthy balance between teaching, scholarship and service, teaching and service are where we as instructors make the most meaningful impact on students' lives.”

Many comments revealed concern about having insufficient time to fulfill expectations for research and service. Many felt dissatisfied with the extent of time devoted to committees and meetings and the general consensus was that time spent in these areas could be better used in the classroom. Most felt that while scholarship is an essential component of an academic career, lack of time often prevents faculty from achieving their scholarship goals. Comments about a heavy teaching load and lack of time for research are numerous. Some faculty worried that expectations for scholarship interfered with the College’s mission, but many emphasized the importance of both teaching and scholarship (“teaching should be the priority, but the College should recognize those scholars who publish in their fields with release time and support. There is room for both types of careers in today's community colleges”).

While many faculty appear to feel that their 27 contact-hour teaching load makes it difficult to do scholarly work, the PSC contract guarantees tenure-track faculty 24 hours of reassigned time to pursue scholarly activity (used within five years as faculty chooses in consultation with their Chair). In the quantitative portion of the survey, only 10.4% of tenure-track faculty who responded rated this reassigned time “not helpful” in achieving their research and publication goals. Tenured faculty are not eligible for this reassigned time, but they may receive reassigned
time if they are awarded a PSC CUNY grant. The College also provides full year, 80% pay sabbaticals.

The survey demonstrates that many LaGuardia faculty members find it challenging to balance their professional lives. About a third of the respondents said outright that their current professional lives are not in balance. Although they differ about what the balanced life would look like, most agree that reducing the teaching workload would be desirable. Given that the 27 contact-hour teaching load can only be altered through collective bargaining negotiations, we encourage the College to provide greater support for scholarship, service, and professional development in the form of reassigned time, whenever possible, for full-time faculty and compensation for part-time faculty, to allow faculty to better develop as professionals and aid the success of their students.

The Self-Study survey also helps confirm that LaGuardia adheres to the principles of academic freedom (FE 10.9). 70.5% of full-time and 76.3% of part-time faculty responded affirmatively when asked if the College provides them with “a healthy environment with regards to academic freedom in your teaching and scholarship” (10.09.08 Faculty Responses to Survey). The College has made the CUNY academic freedom policy and position papers by the American Association of University Professors available on its library website. A spring 2009 Instructional Staff Meeting was devoted to a presentation on recent legal developments regarding academic freedom (10.10.03 Summary of Facts of Cases to be discussed) (10.10.04 Academic Freedom Documents Online), and the Professional Staff Congress chapter chair reports that no academic freedom-related grievances have been filed at LaGuardia since 2007. It is also notable that the College’s 2009 Governance Plan established a College Senate Sub-Committee on Academic Freedom.

Two recent CUNY-wide surveys also showed that LaGuardia faculty are generally satisfied with administrative protection for their academic freedom. In the 2005 UFS Survey, when full-time faculty were asked about their “Satisfaction with Authority to Make Decisions about Content and Methods in Your Instructional Activities,” 85% of respondents were very or somewhat satisfied. When full-time faculty were asked about their “Satisfaction with Administrative Support for Academic Freedom,” 60% of respondents rated themselves as very or somewhat satisfied (10.10.05 2005 UFS Faculty Experience Survey). In the 2009 UFS Survey, both full-and part-time faculty were asked about their “Satisfaction with Authority to Make Decisions about Content and Methods in Your Instructional Activities.” Among full-time faculty, 88% of respondents rated themselves as very or somewhat satisfied. Among part-time respondents, 87% percent rated themselves as very or somewhat satisfied. Another question in the 2009 survey asked full-time faculty to rate “Administrative Support for Free Expression of Ideas.” In response, 49% of respondents rated themselves as very or mildly satisfied (05.3.05 FES).

The UFS surveys indicate that LaGuardia faculty were more confident about support for their freedom in the classroom than for their “academic freedom” (2005 survey) or “free expression of ideas” (2009 survey). This may indicate that some faculty are concerned about the ramifications of research and/or public statements on controversial issues. Satisfaction in this area also decreased among full-time faculty from 2005 to 2009, although part of this discrepancy may be explained by the different wording and reporting categories between the two surveys. The chairs report that no faculty members have expressed concerns about academic freedom, although they
note that some faculty are worried that “students complaining about a text, film, or assignment might limit a faculty member’s right to assign whatever texts” he or she might prefer (10.04.01 Academic Dept Chairs' Response). A small number of the qualitative responses to the Self-Study survey express concerns about what might be construed as academic freedom (10.09.07 Text Responses Faculty Survey). Although it may be worthwhile to ascertain the significance of these comments, they represent a very small portion of the 270 faculty who responded to this question and thus do not warrant undue concern about the College’s commitment to academic freedom.

The College’s policies and procedures to ensure the use of qualified faculty (FE 10.10) are not subject to institutional assessment because they are governed by the PSC-CUNY collective bargaining agreement. Please see Chapter 6, under Standard 11, for our examination of how faculty design, maintain and update educational curricula (FE 10.2).

Summary of Findings and Conclusions for Standard 10
1. The LaGuardia faculty is highly qualified, diverse, and dedicated to the core mission of aiding student success.
2. The College has benefited from a substantial growth in the numbers of both full-time and part-time faculty since 2002.
3. Full-time faculty undergo a multi-step hiring process, which is clearly articulated and consistently applied to ensure they are appropriately qualified for their positions. Part-time faculty are hired through an abbreviated version of this process that maintains the College’s standards for teaching excellence. The faculty as a whole possess a level of academic qualifications that far exceeds national norms for community colleges. Diversity among the faculty is fairly high and increasing, though improvements remain desirable, especially regarding the Hispanic faculty-to-student ratio.
4. The College follows clearly defined evaluation policies for the reappointment of all faculty members and for the promotion and tenure of full-time faculty. The system of annual evaluations, peer teaching observations, and Individual Student Instructional Reports II (SIRs) form the core of this process. Faculty and Chairs feel that peer evaluations are effective in facilitating good teaching, while views of the effectiveness of SIRs are divided.
5. The College makes an extensive array of professional development opportunities available to both full-time and part-time faculty in order to help faculty refine their pedagogy and develop their scholarship. Financial support for faculty scholarship is also available through joint union-management grants (PSC-CUNY grants) and LaGuardia’s EDIT program implemented through a faculty committee. New tenure-track faculty are provided 24 hours of reassigned time for scholarly activities.
6. The College prepares faculty to provide students with academic advisement by offering valuable workshops, training opportunities, and IT support.
7. According to the Self-Study Faculty and Staff Survey, a substantial portion of the LaGuardia faculty often find it challenging to balance their teaching responsibilities with scholarship and service. Overall, faculty members believe that teaching is the core of LaGuardia’s mission as a community college.
8. The College adheres to the principles of academic freedom, has taken steps to inform the faculty of its policy on academic freedom, and surveys indicate that faculty members feel that their academic freedom is protected.
Recommendations for Standard 10
1. The College should support the faculty’s ability to participate fully in service, scholarship, and professional development programs by encouraging and supporting, wherever possible, that these activities come with reassigned time for full-time faculty and funding for part-time faculty.
2. The College should reconsider the SIRs and investigate alternative methods of student evaluation of teaching, and, if a preferable alternative is found, implement a change to this alternative.
3. The College should develop a more efficient procedure for gathering accurate information about faculty professional activity, and it should improve communication with faculty so they understand the importance of reporting this activity to CUNY.