Chapter 4

Standards 8 and 9: Student Admissions, Retention, and Support Services

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

“The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students’ educational goals” (Characteristics of Excellence 31).

Standard 9: Student Support Services

“The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution’s goals for students” (Characteristics of Excellence 34).

Introductory Overview of Standards 8 and 9

LaGuardia is an open enrollment college whose mission is to provide access to higher education to people of all backgrounds, ages, and means. Many students at LaGuardia are non-traditional and have one or more of the background elements associated with greater challenge in meeting their goals, persisting, and graduating: part-time enrollment, GED holder, single parent, 24 years or older, employed, first generation to college, independent of parents’ financial and/or emotional support, disabled or have special learning needs, military veterans, in need of mental health support, and/or in need of basic skills development. With regular collection of data the College produces analytic reports that support strategic initiatives for program improvements to assure the success of these non-traditional students.

LaGuardia organizes support services into five somewhat overlapping categories: academic guidance, academic support services, career-related services, personal guidance, and direct support services. These services are offered through four divisions: Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Administration and Adult and Continuing Education. A complete table of services is shown in Appendix 4.1.

The College has created many effective responses to meet the challenges students face. Although the breadth of services are a testament to the efforts of many committed professionals, the resulting structure is subject to communication problems and duplicated efforts, and can thus be confusing to students. Based on two years of research, the College’s Achieving the Dream project (AtD) concluded that the delivery of student support services is fragmented, not all at-risk populations are targeted, and not all efforts are well coordinated (08.1.52 AtD Final Report). In order to address these shortcomings, in June 2011 the AtD Steering Committee issued five findings and recommendations which the College is currently in the process of implementing (08.1.53 AtD Findings and Recommendations).

In November 2011, the College launched the Center for Student Success as one step towards addressing this fragmentation of services by creating a single referral hub that would enable students to be connected to the best help available, both on and off campus (08.1.73 Center for Student Success web site). The Center is staffed collaboratively by LaGuardia and several New York graduate schools of social work. M.S.W. interns arrange appointments for students with resource providers on campus, in areas including academic support, personal guidance, and direct services, and also make outside referrals. The Center will examine usage data and feedback from students and referral areas to measure its success.
The complexity of the College’s student support structure affirms the emphasis in this self-study on an integrated examination of student retention efforts. Improving retention is a central University and College goal and in recent years the College has engaged in impressive work to collect and analyze retention data, both quantitative and qualitative, in order to better understand what helps or hinders student persistence and graduation. As a result the College is making better progress in giving students a clearer description of the path to graduation and in integrating services wherever possible.

Although the work of two self-study groups is combined in this chapter, the Standard 8 team approached its research with questions about the effectiveness of the College’s overall retention efforts, especially its financial aid policies, and how effectively these efforts used assessment outcomes. They also asked how well the College was working with students who were not accepted into candidacy programs. They questioned how well the College was handling the large increase in applicants and whether these applicants and all students were receiving accurate and comprehensive information. The Standard 9 team researched the effectiveness of the College’s student support services, especially student academic advisement. They asked how well-informed students were about these services, what services were available online, whether students understood the College’s grievance system, and the security of student records.

**Findings for Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention**

Our research confirmed that admissions policies support the mission of the College (FE 8.1), as expected by Middle States. (Sentences and phrases that have been bolded have been taken directly from *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education.*) The Admissions Office recruits, admits, and encourages the enrollment of all academically admissible people and prospective students are encouraged to attend Information Sessions scheduled throughout the year. Counselors assist students in applying to the College, examining objectives, reviewing program requirements, and assessing career opportunities ([09.1.131 Admissions IEAP 11-10 and CUNY Admissions](#)).

With the College experiencing record enrollments, prospective students are encouraged to apply early to avoid waiting lists, and deadlines are posted on the College and CUNY websites ([Deadlines](#)). Each term the Admissions Office sets enrollment targets in consultation with staff from other Students Affairs offices, IR&A, and CUNY’s Enrollment Management officers. The new student target for fall enrollment grew from 4,003 in fall 2007 to 4,341 for the fall 2010 semester ([03.02.01 Fall 10 Enr Plan 3-8-10](#)). To reach the fall 2007 target 6,949 degree seeking students were admitted, while the fall 2010 target required 8,951 admissions.

In summer 2010, faced with record enrollments, CUNY decided for the first time to place prospective freshmen whose applications were received after the posted deadline on a waiting list. In keeping with its mission, LaGuardia accepted students from the waiting list who contacted the Admissions Office or the Student Information Center. These applicants were allowed to submit their applications directly to the College ([08.5.01 Docs on Enrollment Crunch, CUNY Matters Fall 2010 and NY Times CUNY Cutoff](#)).

We determined that admissions policies and criteria are available to assist prospective students in making informed decisions about academic programs, transfer, and testing (FE 8.2, 8.4). Moreover, the College presents institution-wide assessment results as well as
program-specific information, especially student learning outcomes (FE 8.5). Below is a synopsis of College sources of information and the ways students may receive advice on how best to take advantage of that information.

General Information for All Students. The College has a regularly updated web site and issues a College Catalog and a Student handbook annually. Students can access and navigate all other web pages from the LaGuardia home page. Many departments and academic programs have websites that are accessible from the LaGuardia home page, as well as brochures. The College has also created a “one-stop” Enrollment Services Center in C-107 where students receive registration and financial aid services.

Information for Prospective Students. The Admissions Office organizes recruitment events, community outreach events, admission workshops, college tours, and college fairs at affiliated high schools involving representatives of most academic programs. The Admissions page guides students through the admissions process step by step. Accessible from the Admissions web page is “VIP,” a personalized new student portal with information about becoming and being a student at LaGuardia with specific areas of interest, as well as other useful links. Student Financial Services (SFS) and the Bursar, in collaboration with the Marketing and Communications department, produced a three-minute podcast for prospective and new students, available on the SFS web page, which provides information on LaGuardia's academic calendar, financial aid, and tuition payment (SFS).

Information for New Students. At the beginning of fall I and spring I semesters, LaGuardia offers Opening Sessions/ New Student Orientation for all new and transfer students to provide information on starting successfully, including printed material on College resources and a USB flash drive with College brochures. Entering students are advised at New Student Advisement & Registration where educational planners provide them with individualized Personal Education Plans. English as a Second Language (ESL) students are advised by ESL faculty.

All students are required to take the New Student Seminar (NSS) where they learn more about being successful at the College. Seventy percent of fall 2011 new freshmen and transfer students signed up for the NSS in their first semester (IR&A data warehouse). Special programs, such as the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs, College Discovery, and the Black Male Initiative offer additional orientation sessions, handbooks, and counseling for new and continuing students.

Information for Continuing Students. In an effort to promote academic programs, departments have Program Days that are scheduled at least once a year. The College also offers informational events with Transfer Fairs and Financial Aid Awareness Days.

Students and advising faculty use the College’s DegreeWorks, an online academic progress reporting system, to audit progress toward a degree. Throughout their academic careers students are able to review this easy-to-read, comprehensive snapshot of their academic progress. With DegreeWorks, students and their advisors can be assured that prospective courses satisfy degree requirements, avoiding graduation delay (Advisement). The Enrollment Management Center offers workshops on using DegreeWorks.
Since 2010, the College has focused on increasing support for faculty advisement of students. The Center for Counseling, Advising, and Academic Support organizes a college-wide Advising Day in the spring and fall semesters (10.07.08 College-wide Advising Fa 08-Sp 10, 10.07.09 Advising Faculty Survey 11-08, 10.07.10 Advising Faculty Survey 5-09, 10.07.11 Advising Faculty Survey 5-10, 10.07.12 Advising Faculty Survey 11-09). In these sessions faculty advise students with more than 30 credits. The Center for Teaching and Learning has begun offering the “Art of Advising” faculty professional development seminars (10.07.07 DAC Report-Art of Advising). Also introduced in 2010, the new Advising Central Website (Advising Central) provides faculty with comprehensive and constantly updated information.

GradPath is a technology initiative under development as an outgrowth of the Achieving the Dream project to help students manage their path to graduation. It will integrate other existing support programs (e-SIMS, Degree works, e-Portfolio, and e-Career) within a single-sign-on student portal. GradPath is designed to help students understand what they should accomplish to reach particular milestones, to help them connect to available support, and to provide them with helpful tips and directions to learn behaviors, mindsets and attitudes in order to be successful. This web tool will also enable appropriate faculty and staff to monitor students’ progress (08.1.40 AtD Presentation MLJ, 08.1.42 AtD MLJ Presentation 1-20-11).

The College Website. The website is the central reference for most basic information about the College, including office locations, phone numbers, news, events, and workshops. After a substantial overhaul, in fall 2011 the College launched a newly designed website with a new content managing system, Ektron, to more easily manage updates in content and design.

Research on the effectiveness of college communication has targeted a number of interesting initiatives. One effort has been to convince students to register on time. Using registration tracking data, the College found, for example, that as of June 7, 2010, there was a 47.5% increase in continuing students who registered on time for fall 2010 compared with a year earlier (09.1.095 DAC Report 7-5-10).

Further details about how the College communicates to current and prospective students about academic programs and policies, basic skills, financial aid, and transfer can be found in Appendix 4.2.

Information for Allied Health Candidacy Programs. Of particular concern to self-study teams has been the communication between the College and students who fail to gain admission to the clinical phase of the College’s highly competitive health programs. These programs require students to apply for candidacy after completing key pre-clinical courses before beginning the clinical phase of their program. Many students must switch majors after failing to meet the rigorous clinical requirements. The College is concerned about the degree to which these students are aware of the rigor of these programs and have a clear understanding of the requirements for these careers. Each program provides students with a handbook outlining the academic requirements, philosophy, assessment criteria, and the transfer information (for example, the RN Program Handbook).
Generally, students who express interest in the Allied Health programs declare their major at the time of admission and are given the code for these majors. In some cases the Admissions Office may give students the “Liberal Arts: Math and Sciences” major, if the students apply relatively late, if they have basic skills needs, or if they receive financial aid (particularly TAP, because TAP regulations restrict electives outside of the major, which some students may desire).

The College has developed two alternate tracks for students who are interested in studying nursing. The Practical Nursing (PN) Certificate Program was developed in 2005 to address the needs of students who wish to continue their careers in the nursing profession but whose academic achievements do not qualify them for admission to the Associate Degree Nursing Program. In fall 2009 the PN program was changed from 12 months to 10 months to allow faculty time to evaluate and revise the curriculum during the two month summer break. This time frame also allows students to prepare for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-PN) State Boards and encourages their application to the LPN to RN Advanced Standing Pathway (08.2.05 Annual Report PN 09).

In addition, the College began a new track called “LPN to RN Advanced Standing Pathway” in fall II 2006 for students who are Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) to continue their education and training to obtain a registered nursing license. Students begin their coursework in ACE as non-degree students and are required to take additional courses such as Human Biology and Medical Dosage before applying for candidacy into the Pathway. Once accepted into the clinical phase, students complete the LPN to RN Bridge course which prepares them to enter their final year of the Associate Degree Nursing Program.

Beginning in fall 2010, CUNY mandated that students who express interest in nursing are to be placed in the Allied Health/ Undeclared major until they meet clinical requirements or change to a major other than Nursing. The former Nursing major code is now only given to students after they are admitted to the clinical program (08.2.33 Interview with Chairs and Deans, 08.2.37 Interview with Academy Coordinator and Counselors). This should help students understand that admission to the College is not admission to the Nursing program.

The College communicates with students regarding the requirements and responsibilities of the programs that require candidacy via the College website, catalog, program brochures, and handbooks. Health Science program websites outline all requirements (for example, the PTA online handbook). Major handbooks are available in each department and in New Student Seminar courses. Special sections of New Student Seminars are dedicated to Health Science majors where a panel of professionals from Health Sciences speaks to students on requirements and career choices. However, not every Health Sciences major registers for these sections. This inability to concentrate students prevents even distribution of critical information.

All Allied Health programs hold a separate Advisement Day for their majors. Pre-clinical students are advised by the Academy Coordinator for Allied Health or by counselors if they are in the New Student Seminar or if they are on academic probation (08.2.37 Interview with Academy Coordinator and Counselors). Students admitted to the program have regular meetings with their instructors and are referred by faculty to join related student clubs and support groups conducted by a counseling faculty member. A number of students who are enrolled in the pre-
clinical phase report benefiting from peer support offered through student clubs, such as the Nursing and PTA Clubs.

More details on the retention efforts, retention reporting, and student support of the candidacy programs can be found in Appendix 4.4.

We also found that the College provides accurate and comprehensive information, and advice regarding financial aid and refunds (FE 8.6). The Bursar and Student Financial Services have implemented changes to retain students during the semester and reduce the number of students leaving for financial reasons. For example, communication with new students has been improved by using the Hobson customer service management system (VIP). With this personalized portal, students are directly linked with the bursar and financial aid office information (08.3.14 Guidelines for different Groups of Students). To prevent students from losing their registration as a result of cancellation for non-payment, the College began sending warning text messages; it increased the number of cancellation dates to provide multiple opportunities to settle bills; and it offered online payment and payment plan options. Assessments demonstrated their advantages and success (09.1.124 Productivity Award, 09.1.125 Bursar Support Services, 08.1.29 Bursar Text Messaging as a Retention Strategy). The Bursar Office reported 31% fewer students cancelled in spring 2010 compared to spring 2009. In fact, since the inception of text messaging there has been an overall 25% decline in cancellations (09.1.120–123 Bursar Cancelations: Fa09 II vs. Fa08 II; Sp10 I vs. Sp09 I, Sp10 II vs. Sp09 II, and Fa10 I vs. Fa09 I).

Other changes include a single simplified online application for LaGuardia scholarships, and new workshops to help students prepare for and pass the Ability to Benefit (ATB) test, which is required to apply for state aid for students who do not have a US high school diploma or recognized equivalent. Details on the changes the Bursar and Student Financial Services offices have implemented since 2007 are given in Appendix 4.3.

Our research established that the College conducts ongoing assessment of student retention efforts and reflects its findings in its admissions, remediation, and related policies (FE 8.8). LaGuardia has launched an array of programs and services over the past five years to raise academic quality, improve student success, and foster a creative and supportive environment. Many of the College’s efforts to retain students to graduation are focused on particularly critical points in their academic careers or on particular groups of students. Retention efforts at LaGuardia are strategically important and, as such, stress clarity of outcomes and assessment.

Appendix 4.6 summarizes the College’s retention efforts, and Appendix 4.7 provides a detailed description of the retention programs highlighted below to demonstrate the College’s assessment of retention efforts.

Assessment Highlights in College Retention Programs

New Student Orientation. In fall 2009 82% of orientation participants registered for the following spring semester compared with only 72% of students who did not attend. New students participating in spring 2010 were 16% more likely to enroll for courses in fall 2010 than new students who did not participate (08.1.23 NSO Fa 10 Sp 10 Data).
First Year Academies and Learning Communities. From fall 2005 to fall 2007, 75.6% of students in First Year Academy Learning Communities were retained compared to 71.1% of their peers not enrolled in learning communities. The four-year comparison of pass rates in remedial English 099 (fall 2004 - spring 2008) for Academy participants was 69.5% compared to non-academy students at 63.9%. New First Year Academy Learning Communities reduced the failure rate by 9%, the course attrition rate by 6%, and the semester-to-semester attrition rate by 6% according to 2004 data. In 2009, students enrolled in a Liberal Arts Cluster had a passing rate for ENG 101 that was 10.2 points higher than students not enrolled in a cluster. In addition, student ratings of their Academy experience on key questions from CCSSE exceed LaGuardia and national means (LC Homepage, First Year Academy Website, 08.1.15 Learning Communities, 08.4.08 CTL Report 2-11-10, 08.4.09 CTL Data Report 11-29-07, 13.1.07 Retention Committee Report 2006).

Student Financial Services. In assessing the characteristics of students who lost course registrations because of non-payment, the ad hoc Cancellation Committee found that continuing students who had failed to file for financial aid were most at risk (08.3.03 Bursar Cancellations and Financial Aid). The Bursar and Financial Aid Office then launched a firmer communications effort, including text messages, toward these students.

Expanding Academic Opportunities. Student enrollment in fall session II and spring session II classes increased by 7.8% from 3,882 to 4,186 students (05.1.53 LaGuardia Final LaG PMP report 07-08 - 3.1.3). Enrollment in these six-week sessions helps students maintain full-time status and accelerate progress towards a degree. The percentage of withdrawals decreased by 1.5% from 13.2 to 11.7% (02.1.01 Strat Plan, 05.1.53 LaGCC Final PMP Report 07-08, and 08.1.34 AA New Majors Conversation with Interim VP).

Transfer Services. Because 37% of 500 students completing a Needs Assessment wanted more individual interaction, the Transfer Center offered more individual appointments.

College-Wide Advisement Day. On the College’s post-service assessment form, approximately 70% of students said they were motivated to take actions after College-Wide Advising Day. Faculty participation increased 31.3%, from 64 in spring 2009 to 84 in fall 2009, and rose to 96 in fall 2010 (09.1.159 Summary of Advising Data 2008-2010.docx).

DegreeWorks. Over 10,900 students (an increase of 400) logged into DegreeWorks as of June 2008. The number of DegreeWorks faculty training opportunities increased by 80%, from five workshops in spring 2009 to nine workshops in fall 2009. All 22 faculty completing the DegreeWorks workshop evaluation stated that they “benefited from the session” and 90.5% “learned something new” (02.1.01 Strat Plan and 05.1.53 LaGCC Final PMP Report 07-08).

Art of Advisement Seminar. The evaluations of approximately 40 participating faculty and staff revealed positive satisfaction and learning outcomes (2009-10 target 6.1.4). All faculty members who participated in the Art of Advisement seminar series went on to advise students during the College-Wide Advising Day (02.1.01 Strat Plan, 10.07.07 DAC Report-Art of Advising, and 08.6.01 Promising Practices Award).
New Student Advisement and Registration. During fall 2009 and 2010 sessions, a sample of over a thousand students assessed their satisfaction (09.1.095 DAC Report 7-5-10). Organizers responded with changes for 2010 and 2011.

ePortfolio. Students who developed ePortfolios scored higher than both the LaGuardia and national means on a number of key indicators in CCSSE, including synthesizing ideas, writing, working effectively with others, and making judgments about the soundness of information, arguments or methods. Research conducted over multiple semesters shows that students building ePortfolios are more likely to return the following semester. 76.0% of students in a random sample of ePortfolio courses returned the next semester, compared to 70.9% for students in non-ePortfolio, but otherwise comparable, classes (08.1.38 CUE Report 08-09, and 13.1.07 Retention Committee Report).

Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). For its first cohort the ASAP one-year retention rate was 76.4% and 64.9% for two years. Within two years 28.8% of that cohort had graduated. The one-year retention rate for the second cohort is 89% and the one-semester retention rate for the third cohort was 93%. The ASAP program has more than doubled the two-year College graduation rate of 12.5% (08.1.16 ASAP Presentation to AtD, 08.1.17 ASAP FY09 Report, 08.1.18 ASAP Report FY10).

College Discovery. The one-year retention rate for first-time full-time freshman in this program from fall 2007 to 2008 improved from 67.2% to 72.8%. CUNY data for five cohorts starting with the fall 1996 group show that the five-year graduation rate for LaGuardia’s College Discovery has consistently exceeded the rate for the “regular” population, varying from two to ten percentage points higher (08.1.38 CUE Report 08-09, 08.1.30 CD-1 year retention stats 07, 08, 08.1.31 CD 2-year Retention Stats, and 09.1.040 Counseling Dept PPR).

Early Alert. Of the 1,982 students identified as “at-risk” for failing, 66.4% passed their course and 9.4% officially withdrew. Re-enrollment for the spring 2009 was 73.3%. In fall 2009, 73.9% of Early Alert students re-enrolled (08.1.12 Early Alert AtD Presentation and 13.1.07 Retention Committee Report 2006).

Please see the discussion of Basic Skills in Chapter 7, under Standard 13, for our examination of the College’s programs to ensure that admitted students who marginally meet or do not meet the institution’s qualifications achieve expected learning goals and higher education outcomes (FE 8.3). The College’s transfer credit policies (FE 8.7) are examined in Chapter 6 under Standard 11.

Findings for Standard 9: Student Support Services
We determined that the College provides a program of student support services appropriate to student strengths and needs, reflective of institutional mission and consistent with student learning expectations that is equitable, supportive, and sensitive, through direct service or referral with qualified professionals, where ongoing assessment is used for improvement (FE 9-1-9.3, 9.10). Nevertheless, the Achieving the Dream committee concluded that the College’s advising system is “fragmented, dispersed across numerous departments and divisions and not fully understood by students, faculty and staff. Despite committed work by many, and the best intentions of all, students are required to navigate through a maze of different
offices to obtain developmental advising services.” The committee therefore recommended that the College “re-think and re-organize its delivery of developmental advising services” (08.1.53 AtD Findings and Recommendations).

LaGuardia organizes support services into five categories: academic guidance, academic support services, career-related services, personal guidance, and direct support services.

**Academic Guidance.** The College provides **appropriate student advisement procedures and processes** (FE 9.4), as expected by Middle States. Recommendations from the 2002 Presidential Task Force on Advising for Student Success led to the creation of the Developmental Advising Committee (DAC), providing a locus for faculty and staff communication and training on advising. The Committee redefined advising areas and outlined a road map to help students understand advising phases. Beginning in 2007, the College implemented a comprehensive developmental advising model. The President charged the College with increasing faculty involvement in advising and developing specific advising objectives and outcomes as well as a comprehensive assessment program within the three phases of a student’s academic experience (See Appendix 4.5).

The College now has an advisement program designed for the needs of students at each stage of their academic career. Professional advisors and faculty offer educational guidance tailored to students’ level of academic preparedness and circumstances as well as their majors. Trained staff members advise special population groups, such as students with disabilities, students who participate in the Accelerated Study in Associate Program (ASAP), or students on probation. Communication among these advising groups is facilitated through monthly DAC meetings with a focus on new student issues handled by the Enrollment Process and Strategies Team. Nevertheless, fragmentation issues persist, especially for students who may belong to more than one advising group, such as a continuing student who is also on probation. While the current system emphasizes coordination, the number of offices and individuals involved is large enough to make it challenging to direct students appropriately.

In 2008, DAC began a comprehensive assessment of the Developmental Advising Model and in 2010 reported that its four assessment goals had been achieved (09.1.095 DAC Report 7-5-10):

1. Review the goals for each Developmental Advisement Phase and make any necessary adjustments or clarifications.
2. Conduct an evaluative assessment of Phase I of Developmental Academic Advising.
3. Establish uniform data collection in Phase II, which will provide the basis for evaluating Phase II goals in the 2009-10 academic year.
4. Develop and implement Phase III activities.

Other programs provide academic guidance to supplement advisor-student sessions. Following students’ first contact with advisors, the New Student Orientation (NSO) invites students to identify and prioritize their academic and career goals. Students who attended the fall 2009 NSO were ten percentage points more likely to register for spring semester than students who did not attend, and this rose to 16% in fall 2010 (07.3.13 NSO Fa10 and Sp10 Data). The Office for Transfer Services, restructured in 2009 following an Assessment of Transfer Services (09.1.50 Transfer Report 08-09), helps students explore transfer options and provides guidance on choosing the best transfer college. Assessment continued in 2010 (09.1.49 Transfer Report 09-
resulting in additional staffing and the creation of a blog. The Early Alert Program provides at-risk students with opportunities for contact with advisors between registration periods. Using an online reporting tool, faculty members register concerns, triggering an intervention by an academic advisor. Merged with web attendance, faculty response increased 51.9% (09.1.077 Early Alert Data Assessment 08-10). Early Alert contacted 1,952 students in fall 2008 and 2,213 in spring 2010 (08.1.20 Evaluation of Early Alert Student Outcomes Sp 10).

Academic Support Services. Under Standard 11, Chapter 6 includes an analysis of tutoring services. In addition, most programs offering academic advisement to special populations provide a variety of services such as student success workshops. The Center for Counseling, Advising and Academic Support, for example, developed, implemented and evaluated 40 hours of workshops in fall 2009 and 32 hours in spring 2010 on topics such as Learning Styles and Study Skills, Time Management, Options in Health Care, Making the Most of Academic Advising, and Intent to Graduate. Of the nearly 300 students in fall 2009 workshops, 96% “were motivated to take action as a result of the workshops,” 97% “benefited from the workshop,” and 95% “learned something new” with similar results for the spring 2010 workshops: 99% of the nearly 300 respondents “benefited from the workshops”; 95% “learned something new”; and 94% were “motivated to take action” (09.1.095 DAC Report 7-5-10).

The Black Male Empowerment Initiative (BMI) began in 2004 to provide additional counseling and group support services to this population of at-risk students. The College established benchmarks for assessing the success of the program in 2009 (09.1.064 BMEC Evaluation Report 8-09). Currently the College is evaluating the program as part of an assessment of all Early Alert interventions.

Career Services. After the Executive Council reviewed the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and noted that once again students were less satisfied with career counseling than students at other colleges (see 08.1.02 for 2010 results), it authorized in 2009 the development of the online eCareer Plan to allow students to explore suitable careers either independently or jointly with faculty or advisors. In addition, the Career Central webpage connects students with people, places, and websites to help them choose a major and find out about occupations.

Through funding from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, individuals enrolled in the Family Self-Sufficiency program use the Career Advancement Program in Career Services to start on their career path, change careers, or progress along their career paths through a comprehensive assessment and case management system, with an emphasis on long-term career success through the achievement of short-term goals. Between January 2007 and December 2010 the program served 452 individuals. Through that period there were 115 starts in education with 83 completions. There were 37 starts in vocational training programs that yielded 29 completions, and there were 60 starts in employment (09.1.157 Career Advancement Program outcomes).

Personal Guidance and Wellness Services. The Center for Counseling, Advising and Academic Support partners with Student Services and the Office of Disabled Student to provide personal guidance services to students. Student may access services immediately or by appointment. The
office records each visit (09.1.032 Counseling Dept Contact Form) and tabulates the results monthly (09.1.106 Counseling Walk-ins). While the programs monitor client progress and retention carefully, assessment continues to be a challenge, given the difficulty of constructing true control groups for performance comparisons.

Health Services provides education programs to facilitate the development of healthy lifestyles that enhance intellectual and personal growth (09.1.117 Health Services IEAP 11-10). Its services include coordination of immunization clinics and compliance, enrollment of students in low cost or free health insurance, processing of medical leaves, health counseling, and first aid (09.1.051 Health Ctr Intake log, 09.1.059 Health Services Incident Report 2010, 09.1.061 Health Services Ins Enrollment 2010, and 09.1.062 Health Services STIHIV Testing 2010). The center’s 2010-11 goals are to improve campus mental health, to provide effective and efficient evening services, to raise student awareness of substance abuse, and to increase immunization compliance. As discussed in Chapter 2, all Student Affairs programs have begun assessment projects.

The Office of Student Life and Recreation has been examining the relationship between retention and student involvement in co-curricular activities as well as in new student orientation (09.1.036 Return Rates Fa 09 Orientation). The office’s 2010-11 annual goals are to implement new data collection and reporting systems, design and implement a co-curricular transcript, and raise student substance abuse awareness (09.1.118 Student Life IEAP).

Student Life tracks retention rates for students who participate as club leaders, as student assistants, in leadership and diversity activities, in web radio, and as recreation assistants (09.1.035 Retention and Student Success 9-10). As an example, during FY 2010 the office set a goal of improving retention of club leaders. Training and support were provided to 30 faculty mentors on goal setting, collaboration, and assessment of outcomes. In addition, event training was provided for 60 student leaders. Retention of club leaders increased from 2008-09 to 2009-10 from 75.5% to 93%, and the number of student clubs and faculty/staff mentors increased 20% (09.1.103 Student Life Assessment Highlights).

Direct Support Services. The Enrollment Services Center (ESC) is a centrally located, one-stop shop assisting students with new student advisement, financial aid eligibility, course registration, graduation, and social services benefits. In April 2010 the ESC restructured its staffing to position cross-trained Generalists as “first responders” to students’ immediate needs, while Specialists’ time was reserved for more complex interactions. The ESC assessed front desk engagement with students in summer 2009 against summer 2010, finding that student wait time decreased 20 to 30 minutes during August and September, the two busiest months (09.1.151 The New and Improved ESC).

Student Financial Services (SFS) 2010-11 annual goals are to place more students in Federal Work-Study and to contribute to the College’s sustainability initiative by reducing mailings (09.1.116 SFS IEAP 11-10). Students are encouraged to use the SFS website as well as the Resource Center for staff assistance to complete financial aid applications online or to check their financial aid status and apply for scholarships. A programmatic review has been scheduled (09.1.119 Program and Services Review 2) and assessment plan has been drafted (09.1.116 SFS
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IEAP 11-10). LaGuardia students are less satisfied with financial aid advising than students at other colleges according to the CCSSE survey (08.1.02 CCSSE Exec Summary 2010). This disaffection will be evaluated in the upcoming assessment.

Single Stop USA collaborated with CUNY community colleges in fall 2010 to provide free state and federal tax preparation, financial literacy coaching, legal advice, and benefits screenings for students and their families eligible for public assistance. As of September 2010 Single Stop tax experts had helped 460 CUNY students receive over half a million dollars in refunds (Single Stop Announced, Single Stop Website).

Federal law requires that the International Student Services Office assist and advise F-1 visa students, while maintaining careful records of student status and progress. One primary service provided by the office, assistance on the preparation of federal applications for permission to work (Optional Practical Training), resulted in a 98% approval rate in fall 2009 (N=141) (09.1.063 Int'l Student Data). International student retention has always been high with return rates increasing from 81% in fall 2009 to 91% in fall 2010 (09.1.064 BMEC Evaluation Report 8-09).

The Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC) is a licensed child care facility for children ages 12 months to 12 years. The facility educates families through workshops on parenting strategies, discipline techniques, and relationship counseling (09.1.052 ECLC Programs). The Center assesses its effectiveness in meeting its operational goals through parent feedback forms twice a year. Parents indicated in 2009-2010 that the ECLC program goals are clear, that teachers maintain regular communication through formal conferences to discuss their children’s progress, and that having child care on campus enabled them to remain in college (09.1.056 ECLC Feedback Tally). The internal review of operational goals (09.1.052 ECLC Programs, 09.1.057 ECLC Monthly Intake Report 09, 09.1.058 ECLC per academic year) feeds into the ECLC End of Year Report and Project Plan (09.1.055 ECLC Report 06-07), an external audit required by the CUNY Office of Student Affairs.

A complete list of student support services is available in Appendix 4.1.

Further, we found that the College has reasonable procedures, widely disseminated, for equitably addressing student complaints or grievances and maintains records of student complaints or grievances (FE 9.6, 9.7). The College publicizes its grievance procedures in many ways and has made improvements in increasing student awareness. Historically, a student handbook that delineated the policy was distributed to incoming students registered for the New Student Seminar, but this was insufficient because not all new students enrolled. Now, all students are emailed a link to an online handbook, and those who attend New Student Orientation also receive a flash drive containing the handbook URL. In another instance, Student Affairs launched a poster campaign in 2009-10 about the role of the Ombuds Officer as student advocate, and in 2010 the division created an Office of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Advocacy to house the Ombudsperson and the Student Judiciary Officer. Other offices, too, participate in raising awareness. For example, the Office of Public Safety publishes procedures for filing complaints of sexual harassment, discrimination, and hate crimes on its webpage. The Academic Standing Committee describes the procedure for appealing its decisions on its own webpage as well. Grievances are tracked by all these offices, and reports are stored appropriately
and released in accordance with CUNY’s “Henderson Rules,” which define codes of conduct for students at all CUNY campuses, as well as HIPAA and FERPA rules.

Based on a recent survey, more than 65% of student respondents were aware that they could appeal a grade and 60% were aware that they could appeal a disciplinary action. Students who have attended the College longer appear most informed about these processes. The College is continuing assessment to gain a fuller understanding of the effectiveness of communications about complaint procedures (01.3.03 Student Survey Results).

During 2010-11 the Ombudsperson handled 655 issues. The range of issues included bursar cancellations (19%), academic issues (14%), Student Financial Services concerns (13%), complaints against faculty (9%), scholarship and/or emergency funds (8%), and a range of miscellaneous issues (37%) (09.4.06 Report from Ombuds Office 7-11).

Finally, we found that the College has policies and procedures for the safe and secure maintenance of student records and has published policies for the release of student information (FE 9.8, 9.9). The paper and electronic records of students overseen by the Registrar are stored and made available under strictly enforced guidelines. The systems maintained by the Adult and Continuing Education division are limited to certain staff and are password-protected. Paper files are kept according to the CUNY Records Retention and Disposition Schedule. The physical files for each student are stored in a locked records area on campus with only three Registrar personnel having access. The College is in the process of imaging print records to facilitate administrative efficiency.

Every CUNY Student Information Management System (SIMS) user has customized access which limits his or her ability to add, edit or delete data. Every SIMS user account is created in the Registrar’s Office using a form that requires supervisory approval and acceptance of terms and conditions regarding the confidentiality of student data. DegreeWorks account requests are also reviewed for appropriate use. The Registrar's Office assesses changes to account access for appropriateness before processing. Once a year, a verification list of all SIMS users is circulated to all supervisors, asking them to verify that the staff members listed still belong to the unit and are eligible for SIMS access. Supervisors notify SIMS of departing employees to be deleted from access. A DegreeWorks audit culls non-users and departed staff.

These strict access policies are in part a response to a situation regarding inappropriate changing of grades that occurred between 2004 and 2006 (which also led to the arrest and dismissal of a college employee). In addition to restricting access to SIMS, the College altered its protocols from manual submission of grades to the better-controlled process of web grading. Grade changes can still be authorized by professors, but the departmental chair is also involved in each grade change. The College has expanded and regularized the SIMS audit process that discovered the discrepancies.

Archived writing examination booklets and testing scansheets are kept in a locked area of the Testing Laboratory or in the locked records area and follow the CUNY retention schedule.

The College’s policies for the release of student information follow the federal guidelines of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The Registrar analyzes all student data requests made to the Information Systems via a GroupLink work order to ensure the
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confidentiality and integrity of student records. As part of the ticket routing, a Registrar staff member reviews the request and reserves the right to question or deny the request. The Registrar is responsible for increasing awareness of FERPA and training on the proper dissemination of student information. CUNY has made IT responsible for inventorying the existence of identifiable individual information on distributed computers and enforcing the security of such information.

The College catalogue (09.2.68 College Catalog-2011-12, Appendices: College and University Policies) and the Student Handbook (Students’ Rights and Responsibilities) explain the College’s FERPA policy with examples of legitimate educational reasons why a student’s record would be disclosed despite a nondisclosure request. The Handbook does not delineate the procedure for preventing disclosure of non-directory information. The form to request nondisclosure (FERPA Nondisclosure Form) is available online on the College’s Registrar’s Office webpage and on paper at the Registrar’s Office.

The College does not engage in inter-collegiate athletics (FE 9.5), except some club sports.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions for Standard 8

1. Guided by its open access mission, LaGuardia has welcomed growing demand from potential students. Each semester the Director of Admissions meets with Student Affairs staff, IR&A, and CUNY’s enrollment management officers to plan enrollment. The College communicates early with prospective students and encourages them to attend information workshops.
2. The College ensures that current and prospective students have accurate and comprehensive information about academic programs and policies, basic skills requirements and testing, financial aid, and transfer. The College disseminates information via its regularly updated web site, college catalog, and student handbooks and provides information to students at all points in their academic careers.
3. A particular concern has been the College’s communication with and support for those students who have applied to candidacy programs in nursing but are not accepted. The College has developed alternative programs to address the needs of students who wish to continue in the nursing profession but whose academic achievements do not qualify them for admission to the extremely competitive Associate Degree Nursing Program.
4. From before students enter the College until they depart, LaGuardia has both college-wide and more focused initiatives to support students as they endeavor to persist and graduate. These programs conduct assessments and use analyses to inform decision making.
5. The College has changed its financial services processes to promote retention and prevent students from leaving because of financial hardships. Changes include improved communication between Student Financial Services and students, review and clarification of the financial aid application process, increasing the number of bursar cancelation dates, and organizing workshops to help students pass the Ability to Benefit Test.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions for Standard 9

1. The College offers a comprehensive program of student support services from point of entry to graduation, encompassing students’ academic, personal, and social development. Each program and office must engage in regular assessment activities to assure that it is meeting its goals and is aligned with the College mission.
2. The College’s Achieving the Dream project (AtD) concluded that more work is needed to remedy a fragmentation of services that confuses students and potentially undermines their experience at the College. In order to address these shortcomings, in June 2011 the AtD Steering Committee issued five recommendations which the College is currently in the process of implementing.

3. Since 2007, the College has made many structural changes to academic advisement in response to its ongoing program of assessment. Of particular note is the implementation of a process that permits each of the College’s advising departments to concentrate on one of three stages of a student’s development. Further, in 2010 the College launched an internal website, “Advising Central,” to ensure that faculty and staff who advise students have accurate and comprehensive information. In addition, a number of advising groups have been consolidated into the Center for Counseling, Advising and Academic Support.

4. The College adheres to sound policies and procedures to ensure the security of student records, following the federal guidelines of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Students have an opportunity to permit or deny third-party access to records using the Directory Information Non-Disclosure Form. Parties can request student non-protected information through the Freedom of Information Law. The College continues to publish policies and procedures online to assure maximum transparency. Student Affairs recently created the Office for Student Rights, Responsibilities and Advocacy whose purpose is to satisfy disputes and serve as a liaison between faculty and students concerning breaches of academic integrity.

Recommendations for Standards 8 and 9

1. New Allied Health majors should be mandated to register for an Allied Health section of New Student Seminar in order to obtain essential information about the programs, including requirements and career options.

2. The College should assess the effect of its Ability to Benefit (ATB) preparatory workshops on the pass rate of students taking (or re-taking) the ATB test.

3. Gaps in advising continue to exist because of the decentralization of advising services. A study of these issues has been undertaken by Achieving the Dream and the recommendations from that committee should be implemented.

4. The College should create a position and/or office whose sole responsibility is to supervise, manage, coordinate, and assess all retention initiatives at the College.

5. The College should develop and mandate a comprehensive assessment methodology that can be used across all retention programs and initiatives.