Making Learning Matter: Building Guided Learning Pathways at LaGuardia Community College

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LaGuardia Community College is pursuing a sustained, multi-layered strategy to place learning, teaching, and cohesive curriculum at the center of a guided learning pathway. Implemented in both general education and disciplinary majors collegewide, our Learning Matters core competencies offer faculty powerful tools they use to design, enact, assess, and refine cohesive curriculum pathways. Curricular coherence is central to our innovation, but it does not operate in isolation. Its effectiveness emerges from careful alignment with an array of complementary reform strategies. High impact professional development supports faculty and staff as they connect curricular coherence with engaging pedagogy and faculty-driven assessment processes. Our ePortfolio practice shapes dynamic digital learning processes that help students to understand and engage those pathways and make them their own. This integrative strategy positions learning—student learning, faculty learning, and organizational or institutional learning—as the essential central element in a broad and effective educational improvement effort.

The effort to build guided pathways for students plays a pivotal role in current educational improvement efforts in community colleges and broad-access universities (Bailey Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015). Focusing on structural reforms such as strengthened advisement and clearing curricular hurdles to student success, initiatives such as Achieving the Dream (ATD), Complete College America, and the Guided Pathways project of the Association of American Community Colleges have engaged hundreds of campuses with versions of the guided pathways strategy. Yet attention to one of the four key pillars of the guided pathways model—ensure learning—has lagged behind, undercutting the impact of these educational improvement efforts.

ATD President Karen Stout (2018) recently acknowledged the reform movement's "limited focus on teaching itself, and, more importantly, what is required for institutions to build a culture of teaching and learning excellence" (p. 5). Stout spotlighted the need for a new improvement model, one that "places faculty members, departments and divisions at the center of a process" (p. 9) that links structural reform with broad and meaningful change in classroom practice.

If we are to put students at the center, excellent teaching and support for quality instruction must be at the core of our work. Creating greater urgency for teaching and learning in institutional reform is long overdue. But the onus cannot solely be on faculty to do more. They need support and time for more reflective practice and to participate in ongoing collaborative professional development. They need support and incentives to enable them to teach and learn in new ways. (p. 5)

With the help of a Teagle Foundation Curriculum Coherence grant, LaGuardia Community College, CUNY, has developed and begun to implement a multi-layered strategy for integrating learning and teaching improvement with the rest of guided pathways. Implemented in both general education and disciplinary majors collegewide, our Learning Matters core competencies offer faculty powerful tools they use to design, enact, assess, and refine cohesive curriculum pathways and help students build the skills and capacities needed by 21st century learners. Curricular coherence is central to our innovation, but it does not operate in isolation. Its effectiveness emerges from careful alignment with an array of complementary reform strategies. High impact professional development supports faculty and staff as they connect curricular coherence with engaging pedagogy and faculty-driven assessment processes. Our ePortfolio practice shapes dynamic digital learning processes that help students to understand and engage those pathways and make them their own. This integrative strategy advances what Barr and Tagg (1995) called "the learning paradigm" (also see Bass, 2012) and positions learning—student learning, faculty learning, and organizational or institutional learning—as the essential central element in a broad and effective educational improvement effort.

Learning Matters at LaGuardia

One of eight City University of New York (CUNY) community colleges, LaGuardia Community College is a powerful success engine for low-income, under-represented, and first-generation students. Each year, LaGuardia serves 18,000 credit-seeking students and up

to 40,000 non-credit-seeking students. Just over 70% of full-time students received financial aid in 2017-2018; two-thirds of the students had annual family incomes below $25,000. The vast majority of students are immigrants or the children of immigrants, coming from 160 different countries and speaking 120 different primary languages. To serve these students, LaGuardia has implemented an array of guided pathways-influenced innovations, including more comprehensive, digitally-supported advisement and a credit-bearing First Year Seminar, both at scale. Additionally, LaGuardia is a CUNY leader in the broad implementation of re-structured basic skills mathematics and English curricula (CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2019). Stanford University's Mobility Report Card ranked LaGuardia in the top five community colleges nationwide in moving low-income students into the middle class (Chronicle List, 2017).

LaGuardia's efforts to build guided learning pathways are built around our Learning Matters Core Competencies, which we use to connect and enhance curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Shaping general education courses, key courses of all disciplinary majors, and co-curricular learning programs, our core competencies serve as guideposts for student learning and faculty practice. They play a critical role in helping faculty intentionally design, teach, and assess higher-order, sequential learning experiences that prepare students for 21st century academic and career success.

Since 2008, LaGuardia has operated a robust student learning outcomes system, assessing student learning artifacts gathered via our ePortfolio system (Arcario, Eynon, Klages, & Polnariev, 2013). From 2012 to 2014, a broad conversation among faculty, staff, and students empowered LaGuardia to rethink our core competencies. College governance unanimously approved the Learning Matters framework, prioritizing three high level core competencies that faculty saw as key 21st century learning capabilities needed for advanced education, civic engagement, and careers:

- Inquiry and Problem Solving: Asks students to seek and use disciplinary and cross-disciplinary content knowledge to address challenging issues; they weigh evidence and draw conclusions through a process of synthesis and evaluation.
- Global Learning: Asks students to approach the world's challenges and opportunities from multiple perspectives and engage with issues of diversity, identity, democracy, power, privilege, sustainability, and ethical action. Encompassing multiple dimensions (e.g., intercultural communication and ethical decision-making), global learning helps students prepare for life and work in a complex global future.

- Integrative Learning: Asks students to make connections between ideas and apply them to new contexts, within and beyond campus, and over time. It supports the transfer of academic and non-academic knowledge across semesters and disciplines as well as the higher-order processes of synthesis and application often described as learning for understanding.

Students demonstrate their competency using one of three communication abilities: Written Communication, Oral Communication, or Digital Communication. The ability to communicate with power and clarity in both written and oral forms have long been associated with general education. Recognizing the importance of helping students develop their ability to harness the affordances of digital media to communicate their knowledge and ideas in a fast-changing world, LaGuardia faculty added Digital Communication, which is focused on the capacity to compose effectively in multimedia formats, integrating text, imagery, audio, video, and design.

LaGuardia faculty developed rubrics for each competency and ability, in some cases adapting rubrics developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) project. We embraced the VALUE project's premise that "learning develops over time and should become more complex and sophisticated as students move through their curricular and co-curricular pathways" (AAC&U, 2009, p. 4). With this in mind, course-based student learning artifacts shaped by faculty assignments are gathered at least three times: early, middle, and late in a students' journey towards completion. Each artifact is assessed by a team of readers both for its assigned competency and ability.

The Core Competencies and Abilities are becoming the common building blocks of every student's learning, thus connecting coursework from the First Year Seminar (FYS) to disciplinary capstones. The Core Competencies and Abilities shape high-impact professional development practices led by our Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). They also provide the foundation for our annual assessment of general education as well as our Periodic Program Review cycle. In addition, the Core Competencies and Abilities help us structure new models of teaching and learning into assessment processes characterized by faculty inquiry, reflection, and integrative curriculum revision. The collegewide focus on the competencies and their translation into widespread classroom practice has deepened the integration of general education and program curriculum, and advanced LaGuardia towards a more cohesive guided learning pathway.

Learning Matters Mini-Grants

LaGuardia has engaged the power of the core competencies with a strategic initiative that links curricular change with assessment and educational development, and builds learning for faculty, staff, and students.

For the past 10 years, LaGuardia faculty have worked together in annual college-wide Benchmark Readings to score student artifacts against the rubrics and consider the implications. For three academic years beginning in 2016-17 (the first year of work with our Learning Matters Core Competencies), benchmark data showed that students were growing most consistently in three areas: Inquiry and Problem Solving, Written Communication, and Oral Communication—the three areas that most closely resembled the competency structure in place prior to 2013. Student progress on the three newer priorities—Integrative Learning, Global Learning, and Digital Communication—was more uneven.

As a college, LaGuardia analyzed and responded to these data. We launched an initiative to help faculty better understand these specific learning priorities and strengthen their cohesive integration into the curriculum. Combining a concrete focus on specific competencies and programs with a broader emphasis on the guided learning pathway, the Learning Matters Mini-Grant program has become a centerpiece of this effort.

Drawing from a Teagle Foundation grant and other institutional funds, Learning Matters Mini-Grants support program-based faculty teams in a sustained faculty development process that embodies the guiding principles of high impact professional learning and educational development, as articulated in the framework developed by the New Learning Compact (Bass, Eynon, & Gambino, 2019). Meeting regularly in a sustained CTL seminar, these teams engage in degree mapping, examination of data and student artifacts, assignment re-design, and the testing and scaling of revised curriculum and pedagogy. In particular, the CTL drew on the work of Pat Hutchings to initiate widespread use of "assignment design charrettes," a highly productive workshop process that helps faculty work in groups to focus fine-grained attention on the ways their assignments can most effectively help students achieve desired learning outcomes (Hutchings & Green, 2018; Hutchings, Jankowski, & Baker, 2018). Iterative professional learning conversations created space for faculty to integrate the Core Competencies into redesigned programmatic curriculum and pedagogy at scale and build dynamic connections with innovations emerging from other college-wide initiatives, including the reorganization of the First Year Experience and the transformation of advisement.

The carefully designed professional learning processes supported by the Learning Matters Mini-Grants makes curriculum coherence and learning-focused assessment real for faculty, as they develop authentic assignments that translate the competencies into everyday learning experiences. As programs grapple with integrating assignments based on the competencies and abilities into key curricular junctures, faculty can better see how their courses and assignments contribute to larger goals for student development. During the academic years 2017-18 and 2018-19, mini-grants supported 112 faculty on 24 program-based teams. Teams reviewed curriculum maps and revised assignments in 77 different courses across disciplines ranging from mechanical engineering to theater to occupational therapist assistant, testing new assignments in multiple sections that enrolled approximately 7,918 students. The CTL convened Mini-Grant teams in monthly meetings to support scaling and discuss challenges and successes, building professional learning via a cycle of inquiry, reflection, and integration.

In this article, we offer a set of brief case studies or vignettes that examine three diverse programs supported with mini-grants: Education, Business Administration, and Fine Arts. Each program revised its curriculum for greater coherence: they (a) crafted reflective assignments that asked students to connect competency-focused learning from one course to another, (b) tested capstone assignments that use reflection and revision across multiple courses, and (c) pursued assignment revision that integrates major-specific skills with general education learning outcomes. These efforts have been integrated with the redesign of our First Year Experience, new advisement initiative, and acceleration of remedial education—all occurring simultaneously and at scale (Battle, Chandler, Eynon, Francis, & Radhakrishnan, 2017).

The following vignettes also highlight ways that LaGuardia teams have used ePortfolio practice to help students deepen and integrate their learning. Recently recognized as the 11th validated high-impact practice (Eynon & Gambino, 2016, 2018; Kuh, Watson, Rhodes, Penny Light, & Chen, 2016), ePortfolio practice support course delivery and authentic assessment. Building a longitudinal Core ePortfolio across courses and semesters also helps students examine and represent their learning, enabling integrative reflection processes that highlight "connections among disparate parts of the curriculum" (Miller & Morgaine, 2009, p. 8). As Carol Geary Schneider (2018) wrote,

> ePortfolio, with its consistent focus on problem-centered inquiry, guided and mindful reflection, and students' integration of their learning from multiple contexts, provides both a catalyst and a platform for higher levels of cross-disciplinary inquiry and achievement. Done well . . . ePortfolio

can help bring students broad disciplinary learning and practical skill development together. (p. xiv)

ePortfolio practice is well established at LaGuardia; each year, more than 10,000 credit-seeking students build their ePortfolios (e.g., see Bhika, Quish, & Hofmann, 2018; Collins, 2018; Eynon & Gambino 2016; Kapetanakos, 2018; Radhakrishnan, Hendrix, Mark, Taylor, & Veras, 2018). Each of the programs profiled here used ePortfolio as an integral element of their curriculum, employing a new, highly graphical Digication interface. The Core Portfolio and this dynamic platform are particularly well-suited to Integrative Learning and Digital Communication. More broadly, ePortfolio practice makes guided learning pathways more visible to students, helping them become more active agents in their own integrated learning experience.

It is too soon to say with confidence that these efforts have significantly changed student learning related to our Core Competencies and Abilities. Our data are still preliminary. However, the early signs are highly encouraging and the process is powerful, as these vignettes suggest.

Education Program

During the past three years, five faculty members from the education programs have collectively worked on curricular revisions. LaGuardia offers four education majors serving 762 students: early childhood education, childhood education, bilingual education, and secondary education. All four majors are articulated with corresponding majors at a CUNY 4-year college, and all adhere to both industry standards (e.g., New York State Education Department and the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation) and institutional standards (i.e., LaGuardia's Core Competencies and Communication Abilities). The revisions have aimed to make program curriculum more cohesive, strengthening connections among courses and aligning program learning outcomes with the core competencies and abilities. In this section, we discuss two projects: the redesign of the Education Core ePortfolio and the revision of a capstone assignment, both emerging from participation in Learning Matters Mini-Grants. Both projects illustrate the purposeful creation and revision of assignments that facilitate student success by connecting experiences and learning outcomes across the curriculum, thereby providing students with a more coherent curriculum.

With funding from a two-year Mini-Grant, faculty in Fall 2016 began redesigning the Education ePortfolio, where education students showcased their learning. Specifically, we wanted to improve the program's use of ePortfolio in all four education majors as a platform to introduce and reinforce the development of professional competencies (e.g., reflective practice and technological ability), as well as key competencies and abilities (e.g., integrative learning and digital communication). We sought to design and implement a Core ePortfolio—a single ePortfolio students use from their first to final semesters, as opposed to multiple, disconnected ePortfolios created at different points in the student's journey.

Through the mini-grant, faculty designed a Core ePortfolio template, structuring pages with predefined assignments that students could use to create an individualized ePortfolio, and then began testing the template in Fall 2017. We carefully considered the student's program of study, including the learning objectives, course sequence, and programmatic competencies for each course. We intentionally designed ePortfolio assignments that would help students see connections among their various learning experiences. For example, in the Foundations of Education course, a prerequisite for our capstone, students crafted a teaching philosophy. With integrative learning in mind, we decided to build on the philosophy statement by asking students to reflect on the personal, academic, and fieldwork experiences that influenced how they developed their teaching philosophy. In their reflection, we challenged students to articulate what education theories, fieldwork experiences, and personal experiences shaped their philosophy. Responding to a prompt in this assignment, "Considering the courses you have listed in your ePortfolio, which philosophies/theories/concepts have influenced your developing teaching philosophy and why?", one student wrote:

> I took one English class and this professor is who introduce me to Paulo Freire, because the way he was giving the class was that way of critical pedagogy or the way I knew it by (Problem Posing-method) he let his students to participate and he was clear on what he wanted from us (the students).

Examining student ePortfolios, we have found that structured reflection promotes higher-level thinking processes. Students identify the influences on their beliefs and reflect as their goals evolve over time. The Education Core ePortfolio has allowed each student a space to integrate learning that they might otherwise perceive as disparate and unrelated experiences.

In Fall 2018, we received benchmark scores that indicated the education students were still not scoring at the levels we desired. The Education programs then applied for an additional one-year mini-grant. For this grant, faculty continued to target integrative learning and Digital Communication, and added one program competency (culturally responsive pedagogy) and one college competency (Global Learning). Our work focused on the design of a new capstone assignment

housed in the Education Core ePortfolio. In conceptualizing this assignment, faculty looked beyond what students learn in our program courses to what they learn in their general education courses, especially in relation to Global Learning. Our new capstone assignment engages students in reflecting on and assessing their understanding of Global Learning and how it relates to a better understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy and the development of literacy. To complete the assignment, students draw on prior learning experiences in two courses: Foundations of Education (an education course) and Introduction to Language (a general education course). We chose these two courses because they are both prerequisites for the capstone, and both are mapped for global learning. Similar to the earlier assignment, this assignment purposefully draws students' attention to prior learning experiences, and now adds attention to learning experiences in different disciplines. The updated assignment seeks to help students understand why they must take courses that may seem unrelated to their discipline. We piloted this assignment in two capstone courses in Spring 2019. In Fall 2019, the assignment was scaled to all education capstone courses.

As we created and redesigned assignments in the Core ePortfolio, education faculty aligned program and college learning outcomes and built a more cohesive curriculum. We took into account course sequences and programmatic competencies, and promoted learning through challenging students to articulate their own progress through their program of study. The sample assignments described above suggest how education faculty are collectively building a guided learning pathway for students. The program is advancing this process through the design, development, and implementation of online professional development for education faculty as well as through a program reading of sample student artifacts from later semesters (e.g., Spring 2019 and Fall 2019). These steps help us ensure our students are meeting program learning outcomes and college benchmarks.

Business Administration

Faculty in LaGuardia's Business Administration program used the mini-grant process to (a) stage student learning around the competencies and abilities, (b) support academic and career planning, and (c) build each student's professional self-identity. Faculty initially created and piloted assignments designed to develop and assess students' skills in the core competencies and communication abilities across the business curriculum, building on programmatic competencies addressed in each course. In a second year, faculty reviewed and modified these assignments based on feedback and

assessment results, expanded the implementation of these assignments, and focused on four key business courses which would serve as the guided pathway through the program curriculum. Since then, we have been engaged in scaling this new approach.

Faculty identified the need to stage student identity formation and goal development, building on activities introduced in the FYS for business. Assignments embedded into four key courses help students build their skills and provide opportunities for reflection; students now have multiple opportunities throughout their curriculum to engage in purposeful identity formation (i.e., to think about who they are and who they want to be). These steps allow them to review and update academic, career, and transfer plans so that they are more prepared for next steps after graduation. This work is facilitated by the Business and Technology (B&T) Core ePortfolio, which all business majors will build from the FYS to capstone. Students access assignments and prompts through the Core ePortfolio, facilitating implementation of these staged assignments at scale, throughout the program. Students house completed work in their Core ePortfolio, enabling them to reflect on their work and growth across their time at the college.

This effort is made particularly challenging by the scale of our program. Each year, 1,500 LaGuardia students pursue a Business Administration degree, which is designed to prepare students for transfer to business programs at four-year colleges. Our students want to pursue careers such as entrepreneurship, finance, human resources, international business, marketing, and management. To better help these students learn and succeed, our faculty created a sequential roadmap that delineated the specific learning competencies prioritized in each business core course.

In the FYS for business, which all business majors take in their first semester, students undertake assignments designed to help them understand and begin to develop their core competencies. They explore their values and goals and connect this self-exploration to their educational and professional aspirations. They begin to take responsibility and an active role in their education and career, gaining an understanding of academic requirements and transfer/career options while exploring campus resources and opportunities for building essential business skills. In one FYS assignment, students are introduced to Integrative Learning and asked to consider how their other first semester classes could help them succeed as business professionals. In response to this assignment, one student wrote,

> Critical Thinking [a Humanities course] has taught
> me how to set and plan goals as well as how to

have a productive conversation or debate. Intro to Business has taught me about what it takes to own or be a part of a successful business and about different terms and methods that I will need to know in order to be successful in a future career. In future courses, I will be able to use these newly-acquired skills in my writing, speaking, and problem-solving, as well as at future jobs.

FYS students begin to develop Integrative Learning by connecting diverse classroom and non-classroom learning experiences while also beginning to pursue academic and career plans. This sets the stage for further development in later semesters.

In the second stage course, People, Work & Organizations, a pre-internship course, students prepare to link their ePortfolios to a LinkedIn profile, connecting their academic work to their identities as emerging business professionals. As part of this process, one assignment asks students to review the self-introduction that they created in FYS and update it by reflecting on their growth and change. They revisit their educational goals and course selection, indicating the classes they plan to take each semester until graduation. In a mid-stage Integrative Learning assignment, students update the career plans they completed in the FYS and reflect on the progress they have made toward their career goals. For this assignment, one student responded,

> I changed my goals because of my experience in People, Work & Organizations. . . . I decided on marketing and public relations because of my desire to be creative. . . . By creating a presentation on public relations and fundraising managers, I was able to research salaries, lifestyles, opportunities for growth, and other aspects of the career. These assignments enabled me to gain insight on possible career choices for me and narrow down my options. My work experience also helped me decide on my new career goal. I have worked in sales and excelled in marketing the product and speaking to customers.

As students engage in purposeful and reflective planning, they build proficiency in Integrative Learning, using information and experiences from different places to reflect on their growth and to make important decisions regarding their future.

The third stage course, Principles of Marketing, is exclusively for Business Administration students. We strengthen their written and digital communication abilities through continued documentation of their learning experiences in and out of the classroom. In their ePortfolios, students explore the relationship between LaGuardia's Core Competencies and a set of competencies and professional expectations established by National Business Education Association (NBEA). Students build off the earlier staged assignments by completing reflections that compare their early academic work with current and projected academic and professional responsibilities. In line with the programmatic content of the marketing course, students consider and create their personal brand, further developing their emergent professional identities.

As students approach graduation, they take the capstone course, Principles of Management. Here they look back at course work completed within courses in and outside of the major and reflect on the capacities they have built. They identify ways these proficiencies have helped prepare them to be a successful business manager. In their final integrative assignment, students create and post into their Core ePortfolio a 3-minute video where they discuss their diverse college experiences and spotlight ways they might apply their new capacities to deal with post-graduation opportunities and challenges.

After creating and piloting the Core ePortfolio and related assignments with key faculty members working on the mini-grant, the program began full-scale implementation in Fall 2018, including adjunct instructors who teach approximately 40% of the classes for the program. The department offered professional development sessions and supporting materials. While it made sense with such a large program to begin efforts with a concentrated team, program leaders feel it is important now to strongly encourage all faculty members to take ownership of the Core ePortfolio initiative for the courses they teach. Moving forward, each full-time faculty member will be a member of the Core ePortfolio team for their particular course(s), and adjunct faculty will also be invited to join the team. These faculty will review assignments and student work to ensure broad implementation of the guided learning pathway. Some of this teamwork has begun already, as the Program is currently in the first year of its periodic program review. Early feedback included recommendations to better align assignments with normal course content. These recommendations have been further explored in Spring 2020 as the program continued its review.

Fine Arts

In LaGuardia's Fine Arts program, the call for dedicated assignments to meet the Core Competencies and Communication Abilities not only spurred faculty to create new and revised assignments; it also became an opportunity to reevaluate the students' programmatic experience and the overall cohesion of the program. Recognizing the need for curricular coherence, the program used Learning Matters Mini-Grants in 2017-

2019 to fund faculty development, the generation of scaffolded programmatic assignments, and the construction of a new Fine Arts Core ePortfolio designed to help students to draw on new curriculum experiences as they develop an artist's professional portfolio.

Fine Arts is the largest program in LaGuardia's Humanities Department. Offering two majors, Fine Arts and Fine Arts/Design Studies, the program consistently graduates the highest number of students in the department. Students undertake a course of practical studio art and theoretical art history classes that build to an Art and Design Seminar, the program capstone. Through coursework, internships, and co-curricular experiences, faculty deepen students' artistic skills and professional artistic practices while developing their conceptual, creative, and critical thinking skills.

The Fine Arts mini-grant team focused on assignments addressing the core competencies. As the Fine Arts program is skill-based, the competencies have been a challenge. Faculty initially found them to be an uneasy fit in their classes; indeed, this was the greatest challenge of the grant work as a whole. We found a two-pronged solution that involved centering program learning outcomes next to competency-based assignments throughout the curriculum.

First, our team redefined our previous approach to the competencies by keeping our programmatic learning outcomes at the forefront of each assignment. The faculty tailored assignments to specific classes and utilized the collegewide rubrics to keep the following program-specific goals in mind: to help students (a) create thoughtful, conceptual works of art; (b) become professional artists who can write and speak critically about their own and others' work; (c) present their digital work purposefully; (d) analyze their artistic process; (e) consider the effect of history on art; and (f) reflect upon their role as artists in a multicultural city and a global world.

Secondly, we instituted a backwards scaffolding model with the capstone as the starting point. Applying backwards scaffolding to a set of related assignments helped faculty develop assignment sequences designed to grow in complexity as students moved towards graduation. For example, an oral assignment based on a backwards scaffolding model would start with the capstone requirement that a student must be able to speak critically about their complete body of work in the model of a professional artist's talk. A midpoint exercise would have them create a video about the ways a work of art addresses ethical and global issues, while an introductory or foundational exercise would prompt them to orally discuss how a piece of their own art took inspiration from the work of a historical artist. Addressing the competencies in this manner allowed us to build curricular coherence and provide carefully considered guided learning pathways for the students.

A second major goal of our grant was to better enable students to create a completed professional artist website. We tested the Fine Arts Core ePortfolio template, which we intentionally designed to grow with the students and guide them through all their college coursework. This Core ePortfolio template includes pages the students will later develop for their outward-facing site, including a curated artist's gallery of images, a reflective artist's statement, and an artist's biography. The Core ePortfolio integrates their learning across the major, tracks the development of their skills and learning, and supports guided reflection designed to demonstrate their ability to discuss their work critically. Further, it provides a free professional platform where students build skills they will need to ultimately complete their freestanding artist's website.

With the launch of our dedicated fine arts FYS in Fall 2020, students began work in the Fine Arts Core ePortfolio template as soon as they arrived on campus, using it for reflective assignments to help them plan their college career. As they progress in their coursework, they draw connections between their classes in reflective, integrated assignments. As they reach their final year, they edit, design, curate, and hone their Core ePortfolio for outward-facing content, with the goal of transforming it into a professional art website by the completion of the capstone. Content for all sections is preloaded with instructional modules, but the site remains fully customizable to meet students' individual needs and artistic styles. Students can hide pages that are unnecessary for their final outward-facing portfolio, which allows them to use a single ePortfolio across their college career, encompassing academic, artistic, integrative, and reflective work while helping them graduate with a functioning artist's website.

Piloting innovations is essential to effective curriculum coherence efforts. Before the launch of the Core ePortfolio, the Fine Arts program conducted a test run in the course HUA185: Illustration, where the professor prompted students to create a unique, curated Illustration ePortfolio, including a blog where the students reflected on the problem-solving process of each assignment. Digital assignments were scaffolded across the semester, permitting the students to build their sites over time. We learned that substantial faculty support was needed both in class and during office hours. However, when taught by a faculty member who understood the assignments and how to use the platform, students produced unique, creative, high-quality websites where they presented themselves as professional illustrators.

One fine arts student whose work exceeded expectations is "Stephen," who tailored his work throughout the class to his professional goal of character design for video games. The professor encouraged Stephen to bring that skill to his ePortfolio so it could

serve as a digital ambassador for his work. He designed a custom illustrated background, a "start" button to mimic a videogame, and even wrote and embedded a soundtrack to add to the vintage videogame experience. Two custom illustrations seemed to animate; when clicking on the hyperlinked first character on the cover page, it took the viewer to the biography page. Stephen was able to bring this website to the capstone class where he made minor modifications to meet the Digital Communication Ability goal of the capstone. In this way, the Illustration course naturally scaffolded to the requirements of the capstone. We hope to structure all major course requirements in a similar manner. Stephen was able to parlay this work into an animation commission when presenting his work at the school's ePortfolio Scholars Day.

Using the most current Benchmark Reading scores, an initial rewriting of assignments began in Spring 2019 for launch in courses in Fall 2019; in particular, faculty worked to revise studio and art history assignments for Integrative Learning, Global Learning, and Digital and Oral Communication that scored below expectations. The college community reviewed our current assignments and revised assignments in Winter 2020. Fine arts faculty self-evaluated and scored certain assignments associated with our capstone in Spring 2020 as part of the internal Periodic Program Review. We expect that the reaction to these new data will be another round of assignment revision in the continuing attempt to create an ideal guided pathway for the fine arts major. With the fine arts FYS, we look forward to offering a rigorous arts foundation for our majors while keeping their full training in the hands of the fine arts faculty. We anticipate the manner in which a student, utilizing the Core ePortfolio, will simultaneously integrate their academic and personal lives with their professional development and preparedness for life as an artist. We expect these efforts to connect the FYS and the capstone, creating clearer guided learning pathways that contribute to student learning and to the cohesion of our program as a whole.

The Learning College

The guided learning pathways spotlighted in these vignettes are clearly works in progress. Using college-wide core competencies as signposts, faculty have worked together within and across programs to create and test assignments that integrate disciplinary skills and knowledge with the learning outcomes of general education. They have intentionally sequenced those assignments so that they progress, course-by-course, semester-by-semester, toward the capstone. These programs have begun to draw on the power of an integrative Core ePortfolio to organize such assignments and make learning more visible and valuable to both faculty and students. Yet inevitably there is much work to be done. Scaling curricular coherence and pedagogical change requires on-going effort, especially in contexts where contingent faculty teach half of the courses. As the vignettes suggest, the faculty in these (and other LaGuardia) programs continue the process of inquiry and revision; they are already looking forward to using assessment data to examine the revised assignments and make further changes.

This is, in fact, essential faculty work in a *learning college* (Bass & Eynon, 2016; O'Banion, 1997). On a campus committed to dynamic organizational learning, faculty are engaged in a systematic and persistent inquiry into teaching and learning. They are teacher/learners, constantly learning with and about students and their learning, using assessment to support a process that combines inquiry, reflection, and integration (Eynon & Gambino, 2016). LaGuardia faculty are using this strategic and iterative professional learning approach—which is applicable to almost any pedagogical innovation—to build cohesive curriculum and put learning at the center of the broader guided pathway effort.

Faculty cannot do this alone, of course (Bass et al., 2019). A holistic and recursive process that integrates curricular coherence with assessment and high impact professional learning must be effectively supported by the college. When the mini-grant process began, faculty teams worked largely on their own. Soon CTL leaders decided that learning in community and through structured, cross-team conversations helped mini-grant teams deepen their approaches. In Fall 2018, the CTL, led by Assistant Dean Eric Hofmann, instituted special, charrette-based seminars for mini-grant teams, helping them dig deeper into the relationship between their assignments and the Core Competencies. In 2019-20, the CTL guided teams in examining artifacts of student learning and using assessment data to further refine their curricula. The center is also inviting mini-grant teams to send faculty representatives to a special seminar that will examine capstone learning and draw on the backwards scaffolding approach discussed by the Fine Arts team.

Larger structures are evolving as well. To strengthen the use of assessment in the institutional learning and change process, the college in Spring 2019 held an expanded benchmark reading process. More than 150 faculty and staff took part in this process, scoring 5,343 artifacts against the Learning Matters rubrics. The CTL and the college's Assessment Leadership Team drew from this vast database to provide each 2019-2020 mini-grant team with robust, program-specific data that they can use to consider their assignments and their larger curriculum structures. While LaGuardia is far from a utopia, in these ways it is demonstrating its adherence to learning college ideals.

It is too early to say that mini-grants have totally transformed student learning. Yet, even now, we can say with confidence the mini-grants and LaGuardia's broader guided learning pathway initiative are contributing to highly significant progress and change. In the past five years, powered by Learning Matters and associated changes in advisement and the FYE, LaGuardia's graduation rates have more than doubled (CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2019), and we have begun to improve our general education outcomes. Our most recent benchmark reading data revealed progress in key areas. For example, the percent of classroom-generated artifacts that effectively address the Learning Matters outcomes has risen significantly. In 2017, only 70% of artifacts examined effectively addressed its assigned competency or ability; by 2019, that percentage had increased to 85%. We have also seen improvements on specific learning outcomes, as well. For example, from 2018 to 2019, college-wide Digital Communication scores improved 0.6 points on an 8-point scale. In Fall 2019, mini-grant teams engaged in a small-scale benchmark reading activity to help them assess students' progress on the competencies and abilities. Among the findings was that artifacts deposited for integrative learning by students at or above 45 credits scored 0.5 points higher than comparable College means (E. Hofmann, personal communication December 20, 2019).

Outcomes assessment and professional learning processes will help us sustain and deepen curriculum coherence. Linking assignment revision to teaching, learning, and assessment can provide an essential foundation for building learning and student success. For us, the Learning Matters Mini-Grants gave faculty the opportunity to structure learning experiences that build upon one another, and to help make those experiences visible and valuable to students. This is critical to our mission as a learning college and is also where our strategy might provide a roadmap for other colleges.

In the words of Teagle Foundation program director Loni M. Bordoloi Pazich, "The challenge—and opportunity—for faculty is in designing courses that fit together in a coherent curriculum" (AAC&U, 2018, para. 3). Structuring curricula with core competencies can "reflect a profound shift toward viewing general education as a means of offering students a meaningful liberal arts experience" (Joselow, 2016). Indeed, as LaGuardia students graduate, they will need to problem solve in diverse teams to address ever more complex issues. They will also need to do so in a rapidly globalizing world where their opportunities for employment—and their ability to lead their communities—depends upon lifelong learning, integrating fragments of data into holistic meaning, and creating strategic solutions that come from authentic assessment of "true" information (Bass & Eynon, 2016; Levy & Murnane, 2013; Schneider, 2018). Our core competencies are not only signposts for curriculum design and the guided learning pathway. They also point towards the higher-order thinking capacities our students will need for 21st century success in advanced education, employment, and civic engagement.

From a larger perspective, the success of creating replicable models for curricular cohesion is a crucial element in equity-focused efforts to provide transformative education for students from under-represented backgrounds. Such models should be a priority for those trying to address persistent social, racial, and economic inequalities in the nation at large. They are essential to open new pathways for economic mobility with job-ready skills, which are so necessary for sustaining our nation's future as a leader in democracy, technology, and education. The movement for curriculum coherence is about empowering students in a new learning paradigm, so that they can invent 21st century solutions to unprecedented global challenges and lead their communities into more secure futures.

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