

## The Self-Study Executive Summary

As a vibrant two-year college within the City University of New York, LaGuardia Community College has proudly served the Queens community for the past 50 years. Located in Long Island City, LaGuardia annually educates thousands of New Yorkers. Since opening our doors to all in 1971, we have been committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we offer a welcoming environment for immigrants of all nations and individuals of all backgrounds. LaGuardia is recognized as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), and we enrolled 89 percent minority students and 47 percent Hispanic students as of Fall 2020. Our successes reflect the hard work and dedication of our faculty and staff – allowing students to write their own futures.

Our guiding principle, “Dare to Do More,” reflects our conviction in the transformative power of education for individuals and for our community. We take pride in living that conviction as a “learning college,” and continuously assess and improve how we support student learning, development, and success. Our strong academic programs and culture of continuous improvement are buttressed by a host of support services and co-curricular learning opportunities, including an Honors Program, Veterans Services, and a range of peer mentoring programs. We recognize the value of providing interactions between successful students and newer students, and peer mentoring and tutoring programs are central to our student experience. The experience of working as a peer mentor for at least one semester in our Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), for example, has had a positive impact on retention and graduate rates. Funded by major federal and private grants, the CTL provides professional development for faculty and staff that is instrumental in supporting student success, including advisement, Universal Design, and assessment from First-Year Seminar to capstone.

As a public institution committed to low-income and first-generation students of color, we are proud that improvements to our programs and services have helped to move our 3-year graduation rate from 16% in 2011 to 32% in 2017. The Stanford University’s Mobility Report Card ranks LaGuardia in the top five community colleges nationwide in moving low-income students into the middle class. The transfer rates of our graduates to 4-year colleges within two years of attaining an associate degree is consistently over 70%. Graduating our students matters to the social and economic future of Queens and New York City, but also matters to address long-standing equity gaps among immigrants and communities of color in our nation at large, as demonstrated by lower retention and graduation rates for students from underrepresented minority groups.

Our Self-Study has empowered our community to look carefully at our strengths and challenges. In this Report, we have presented an honest appraisal of how we live our Mission, and how we might build on our challenges in key areas. Led by President Kenneth Adams, we are confident that our findings will make us even stronger and more inclusive.

The Self-Study used a standard-based approach. Major findings are summarized as follows.

### **Standard I**

The College relies on its Mission to guide resource allocation, curricular development, and governing processes. LaGuardia's Mission and Strategic Plan Priorities are well defined and visible, and drive budgeting, resource allocation, and decision-making. The Priorities were developed to meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff while engaging the internal and external members of the community. Faculty and staff work together to support student growth and development, to address shared Student Learning Outcomes, and to deepen their mutual practices through a careful examination of outcomes evidence and unit strategic goals.

Going forward, we hope to improve the process of how and when we evaluate and set our Mission and goals, and how departments and divisions strategic priorities and planning align with and inform our Strategic Plan Priorities.

### **Standard II**

LaGuardia upholds and is deeply committed to the values of ethics and integrity in our practices, guidelines, and policies inside and outside the classroom, and promotes a climate that fosters equity, inclusion, and respect among students, faculty, staff, and administration. The College also follows an existing body of regulations and guidelines to ensure accessibility. We support activities to promote diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and President Adams has announced a clear commitment to advance DEI initiatives and values. With the hiring of Executive Director Wendy Nicholson to integrate our DEI efforts, we are well-positioned to forming and advancing a Social Equity Plan.

### **Standard III**

Student learning and achievement are central to our Mission. We provide both academic and non-academic support programs to a wide spectrum of students, and faculty and staff enthusiastically dedicate their collective energy and creativity to providing superior learning experiences to typically underserved students, many of whom are members of low income, first-generation, and minority communities. Through our academic programs, student support services, and co-curricular offerings, we provide students with experiences that expand their knowledge, challenge their assumptions, and prepare them for transfer and employment.

Going forward, we plan to improve how we offer effective assistance and guidance, and to expand professional development opportunities for our Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) and adjunct instructors by leveraging the resources of the Center for Teaching and Learning. Further, we hope to better integrate how ACE programs can develop more opportunities for collaboration across divisions and departments.

#### **Standard IV**

Across all levels and instructional modalities, LaGuardia recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with our Mission and offerings. We support student retention, persistence, completion, and transfer and long-term success coherently and effectively. The Student Experience at LaGuardia is the driving force behind high-impact initiatives such as the First-Year Seminar, as well as our advisement and co-curricular programs. Peer mentors, academic tutoring centers, and our Administrative and Educational Support (AES) all lead services designed to keep students on track with their goals. Since [the Pandemic Impact on Support Services and Student Needs](#) survey indicates that some students are not aware of the existence of available resources, we will work to strengthen academic and non-academic student support services, including for evening and weekend students, through ongoing assessment. [880]

#### **Standard V**

We continuously address our Mission and Strategic Plan Priorities through a well-organized approach to each level of assessment, demonstrating our success and identifying areas for improvement. Our academic assessment practices begin with our General Education Core Competencies and Communication Abilities, and extend through our Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Periodic Program Reviews (PPRs). Despite Covid-19 and the transition to distance learning, the assessment of student learning at all levels continued and outcomes data sustains the positive trends that began before the pandemic's inception in Spring 2020. As we move forward, we look to improve communication between different college divisions about assessment, and how results and data are shared across all areas of the College.

#### **Standard VI**

At LaGuardia, we consistently monitor our performance indicators and goals, and build a culture of shared decision-making and accountability. The College's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned, and sufficient to fulfill our Mission and our programs and services. We demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusive planning, budgeting, and decision-making. Our resource allocation is closely integrated with the CUNY budget and is often affected by City and State funding. Despite unprecedented circumstances during the Covid-19 pandemic, LaGuardia continued its strong commitment to inclusive planning, budgeting, and decision-making. At this moment of uncertainty in the wake of the Covid-19 health emergency, we seek to more clearly communicate information about our budget and resource allocation, and to further how members of the College-Wide and departmental Personnel and Budget (P&B) Committees are involved in budget decisions for their areas. We also hope to develop procedural guidelines and periodic assessment for the College-Wide and departmental Personnel and Budget committees.

## **Standard VII**

CUNY-wide and institutional policies and procedures are in place to ensure integrity and accountability in governance across all levels of the College, reinforcing LaGuardia's commitment to be governed and administered to realize our Mission and goals.

Throughout the Covid-19 health emergency and our recent presidential transition, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to shared governance, and in leveraging community feedback to mitigate the disruption to our retention and enrollment. We are committed to inclusive and shared governance, and efforts to maintain and improve effective governance are on-going. Our tripartite governance structure and strong Senate committees reveal a culture of inclusion and representation, as do the significant roles of SGA and Faculty Council. As Standard VI also found, we could improve our system for assessing governance, and for further defining the roles, responsibilities, and activities of bodies like Faculty Council and College-Wide P&B.