

## P R E F A C E

*Lucinda Zoe*

What a delight to be publishing the third edition of *Touchstone*, the Hostos journal on teaching and learning. For three years now we have gathered our forces to document our work, share ideas and pedagogies, explore best practices and, in effect, create a social life for our ongoing conversation around teaching and learning. Besides being a forum for an exchange of ideas among faculty, this annual publication is also designed to provide faculty with an opportunity to prepare a manuscript for publication and have it reviewed and edited by a team of caring colleagues. Dean Kim Sanabria and Professor Carl James Grindley serve as the co-editors of the journal, and have once again, with the Editorial Review Board, taken on the task of critically reviewing and editing the work of their colleagues. They have done so as a true labor of love and should be commended for their thoughtful and caring approach to this work. *Touchstone* serves as the springboard for submission to a peer-reviewed journal in the field. All authors included in this volume are encouraged, expected even, to enhance and expand their articles for publication in the professional scholarship of teaching and learning beyond the college.

This year our Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) has focused its efforts on how students learn as part of a college-wide campaign to improve retention and persistence. What happens in our classrooms on a daily basis is what makes our students persist. It is what faculty do in their classrooms each day to light that fire that will ignite in our students the passion that will drive them towards finding the life they were meant to have—be it an engineer, a math teacher, a forensic scientist or an actor. This is what we, as educators, do and you can see it all here in vibrant color in the pages of this volume of *Touchstone*.

Learning should be integrated and applied and, as one of our education faculty declares, it is often messy, loud, and unpredictable. At least that is what it looks like when it is working and our students are actively participating in the process. Hostos faculty excel in their efforts to examine their approaches to teaching and

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learning and imagine more intentional and creative methods for engaging the students in their course of study—be it quadratic equations, gravity-defying principles of applied physics, content-based ESL instruction and the use of cognates in reading academic English or learning styles in online classrooms. What is evident here in these pages is how engaged we are in not only teaching, but in how our students are learning. National student satisfaction surveys consistently point to a few key characteristics of a good teacher and very near the top of the list is faculty expertise and command of their subject discipline. Hostos faculty are intellectually engaged in their disciplines and continue to publish and present at conferences and use their expertise to inform their approach to teaching to creatively challenge our students by a deeper understanding of how they learn.

The new Faculty Travel Fund encouraged more faculty to share their work and allowed for greater opportunities to travel and present papers at conferences. The CTL hosted the annual COBI Retreat at Bear Mountain in April with over 60 faculty and other professional colleagues in attendance for two and a half days in the woods, working not only across disciplines, but across divisions, to improve student persistence and retention through collaborative initiatives and innovations in the classroom. What a year! And, indeed, our persistence increased the college retention rate from fall to spring over last year, so we should all be proud of our work in the classrooms that did indeed light the fires and spark the passions in our students from one end of the Grand Concourse to the other. On behalf of the Office of Academic Affairs, I am delighted to present this volume of *Touchstone* and invite you to gaze into the window it provides into the Hostos educational experience.

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