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Learning Communities and the Future of the Humanities

PHYLLIS VAN SLYCK

Recently, a colleague of mine whose field is art history and whose specialty is non-Western art made a presentation to our faculty entitled “Disciplining Art: The Effects of Museum Design on Art History Pedagogy.” Through a provocative slide show, he demonstrated the way the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City has constructed, and continues to construct, our understanding of Southeast Asian, African, and Pre-Columbian cultures, marginalizing them in wings off the central space of the museum, where Greek, Roman, and European art are housed. As I began to read the four essays in the Presidential Forum of *Profession 2005*, devoted to an examination of the future of the humanities, I learned from colleagues whose institutions occupy the central space of our “museum” that one of the reasons for dwindling enrollments in the humanities is that we have failed to achieve real interdisciplinarity on our campuses. But learning communities—that is to say, courses clustered around a common theme and taught to the same group of students, a powerful example of interdisciplinarity flourishing on more than five hundred campuses in the United States—were not mentioned, even in the wings of this conversation; in fact, they did not appear in the museum at all.¹

The idea that interdisciplinarity is both lacking and needed in the humanities surfaces repeatedly in these essays. Barbara Herrnstein Smith blames the lack of interdisciplinarity on a “two-cultures ideology,” the “mutually confining and self-perpetuating effects” of the sciences’ and humanities’ caricatures of each other, and she calls for “reassessments, redefinitions, and proposals for new connections” between these fields (20,

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19). Observing, “It’s the boundaries that are dumbing us down,” Louis Menand suggests that humanities programs “hunt down the disciplines whose subject matter they covet and bring them into their own realm” (14). In an earlier analysis of this issue, Cathy N. Davidson and David Theo Goldberg argue that “it has been difficult to promote vigorous and sustained interdisciplinary structures for pedagogical purposes” and that while “distribution requirements pay a token nod to the need for cross-disciplinary exposure,” they “leave the process of synthesizing all this diverse knowledge up to students” (55). While we probably could be doing a lot more to create coherence throughout our programs, there seems to be a complete disconnect between theoretical considerations of interdisciplinarity (such as in *Profession*) and actual on-campus interdisciplinary structures and dialogues that have been in place for some time at all types of institutions.

In response to this discussion (by no means limited to the essays mentioned above) I propose that we look more closely at the expanding learning community movement in the United States and its relevance to revitalizing the humanities. The lack of attention to learning communities as an example of interdisciplinarity is connected to the current debate about the value of the scholarship of teaching. In the spirit of Ernest Boyer, I recommend that we support faculty members engaged in this kind of scholarship (often found in learning community work), because a renewed focus on how students learn, on connections between theory and practice, will also, in the long run, have a great effect on enrollments in the humanities.

Finally, as we think about community, about who is in the wings and who occupies the central space, we should consider the potential role of public community colleges (no longer exclusively trade schools) in the dialogue about the future of the humanities. Community college faculty members, whose voices are rarely heard in *Profession*, are regularly involved in discussions of pedagogy, and, supported by centers for teaching and learning, they often engage in the scholarship of teaching. In addition, at many community colleges learning communities have been expanding because they help educationally disadvantaged students make vital connections among disciplines and they have a proven track record in increasing the retention and success of these students. As we consider the future of the humanities, surely the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as Emily Lardner suggests, need to be foregrounded (12–13). In short, I suggest that we begin afresh to think about teaching, the scholarship of teaching, and interdisciplinary learning *in an inclusive community* of the humanities.

WHAT ARE LEARNING COMMUNITIES?

The expansion of learning communities in two- and four-year colleges and universities since the early 1970s is not news. The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, based at Evergreen State College, has supported the development of learning communities throughout the state of Washington for the last twenty years. In 1996, the center began to serve as a national resource for learning community work, and recent efforts of learning community leaders Barbara Leigh Smith and Jean MacGregor, both of Evergreen State College, received attention in a number of publishing and conference venues in the last five years (see, e.g., Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, and Gabelnick). Their National Learning Communities Project (2000–03) supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts resulted in a series of American Association for Higher Education monographs on learning communities, the development of regional networks related to learning community practice, and an annual Summer Institute for Learning Communities sponsored by the Washington Center at Evergreen. The efforts of MacGregor and Smith, along with Roberta Matthews, Faith Gabelnick, and the current directors of the Washington Center, Emily Lardner and Gillies Malnarich, have provided a focused support network for interdisciplinary structures and pedagogies that have been evolving in public and private institutions over three decades in higher education.

Those familiar with the learning community movement know that real interdisciplinarity (what Menand refers to as Mr. Rogers finding himself in Captain Kangaroo's neighborhood [14])—began in the United States with Alexander Meiklejohn's Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin in 1927, a college within a college created explicitly to prepare students for democratic citizenship. Meiklejohn anticipated the problems regarding coherence in the humanities identified in recent discussions: in relation to curriculum, he argued that "understanding is integration"; that a course of study should not consist of "a series of disconnected readings or separate topics whose relations are left undetermined" but that "every separate subject within it [should] be recognized as a special phase of the central inquiry" (45). As for university structure, he believed that "narrow departments would make it difficult to raise complicated interdisciplinary issues," that a "fragmented curriculum" would prevent "deep engagement" and would stifle the development of community (B. L. Smith 4). Not only did Meiklejohn argue for integration of the curriculum; he also maintained that to develop intelligence, students must be "given active work to do," work that would enable them to "universalize, to deduce, to infer, to connect" (46, 49).

Meiklejohn's team-taught, interdisciplinary, two-year curriculum challenged institutional structures and traditional ideas about pedagogy, and the program was abandoned after five years. Colleagues and administrators outside the program learned, to their dismay, that if you encourage students to study in collaborative, creative, interdisciplinary ways, you promote the development of students who no longer fit the mold; they don't return passively to discipline-specific, lecture-based classes. Today, the inquiry learning approaches that were the hallmark of Meiklejohn's pedagogy have found a place in many disciplines, but learning communities continue to offer the best opportunity to combine student-centered learning with interdisciplinarity.

For those unfamiliar with the structure of learning communities, here is a brief primer. Courses from a range of departments (most often those that meet developmental, core, or major requirements) are clustered around a common theme and offered to the same cohort of students. Faculty members teaching in each community develop cross-disciplinary assignments and activities that address this theme. Some learning communities have team-taught classes; others offer separate classes but have a reflective seminar hour in which students are invited to apply, integrate, and synthesize concepts from the different fields. Many introductory learning communities are followed (two or four years later) by a capstone seminar in which multidisciplinary perspectives are reinforced. Learning communities overcome disciplinary boundaries without promoting discord by taking over the subject area of another department (and this is no "minor curricular point" [Menand 14]); the playing field is level, and there is no need for dramatic changes in institutional structure.

While many learning communities today are part of first-year programs, there are also colleges modeled entirely around learning communities (such as Evergreen State College) and programs within a university (such as George Mason's New Century College and Portland State's University Studies Program). With some exceptions, learning communities have gained more acceptance in public than in private institutions, possibly because private institutions believe they already are a learning community and do not need such explicit structural connections. But current discussions about the lack of interdisciplinarity in the humanities put this assumption in question.

Learning communities are controversial because they invite faculty members to think about teaching in new ways—with others—and to engage in some boundary crossing of their own. These communities also involve additional work, at least at the beginning, and wise institutional leaders find ways to compensate the faculty for this effort. In my expe-

rience, however, once initiated, faculty members are often reluctant to return to the traditional classroom. But learning communities are not for everyone, and they should not be imposed on individual faculty members or departments. They are most successful when they are initiated and supported by the faculty, and they frequently fail when imposed by programs or administrators without faculty engagement.

Faculty members who respond most enthusiastically to learning communities are those who are stimulated by the interdisciplinarity, who see the intellectual benefits of showing students that it is almost impossible to research, understand, or write about a work of literature, a moment in history, a global scientific or technological problem, without exposure to a number of disciplinary perspectives. Yes, responsible scholars provide such perspectives, but I, for one, often find myself wishing that a philosopher or scientist were present in my classroom; I have solved this problem by creating a learning community. The guest-speaker model offers only a taste of what can occur when two or three faculty members are thinking together about connections among their disciplines—over a semester or longer. Many of us who teach in learning communities find Meiklejohn's concerns about "narrow departments" and "fragmented curriculum" to be of continuing relevance (B. L. Smith 2). In this context, we probably should think about dismantling the disciplines, not just redrawing the boundaries, but that is the subject of a much larger conversation. In large public institutions, particularly, learning communities create social as well as intellectual networks, which increase student retention and success. Equally important, wherever they are located, learning communities at their best engage students in a way that develops higher-order thinking skills—analysis, synthesis, reflection, evaluation—in a truly interdisciplinary context.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Mirroring the disconnect between the center and margins of our field regarding interdisciplinarity is a lack of dialogue about possibilities for collaboration between private and public institutions and between junior and senior colleges. It seems time, therefore, that another entity be brought to the table: the public community college, a potential remedy for the problem of disappearing students in the humanities! This suggestion often meets with resistance: colleagues at some of the four-year colleges in the City University of New York system (of which my institution, LaGuardia Community College, is a part) sometimes express dismay at the preparation of these students. So perhaps it would be helpful to explain why community colleges are needed. These colleges currently enroll 46% of all undergraduates,

according to the *National Profile of Community Colleges* (Phillippe and Sullivan 26). They currently enroll 45% of all first-time freshmen, according to the American Association of Community Colleges (*Community College Fact Sheet*), and the American Council on Education called the 1990s “the decade of the community college” because of a 14% enrollment surge (*Choice* 4). Equally significant, while enrollment in the humanities is declining nationally at four-year institutions, the single largest category for degrees awarded at community colleges continues to be liberal arts and sciences and humanities.² There are currently 155 associate degree programs in English language, literature, and letters, and the number of degree-granting majors in creative writing at the community college level has doubled since 1984, according to the American Association of Writers and Writing Programs (Fenza). At my institution, enrollment in the liberal arts AA degree program increased 52% between 2000 and 2004 (“New Credit Students” 23). In addition, our English department, with twenty-nine elective offerings for liberal arts students, recently created a writing and literature major that articulates directly with a sister four-year school (we are one of two community colleges in an eighteen-college system that has an English major). An extensive survey of the status and health of the humanities at two-year colleges is beyond the scope of this essay, but our experience at LaGuardia is food for thought. Purposeful and extensive articulation between community colleges and senior colleges remains, on the whole, an untapped resource.

An example of a powerful connection between one private senior college and a consortium of public junior colleges that is twenty years old is the Vassar Exploring Transfer Program, which brings students from community colleges to Vassar for an intensive six-week summer learning community, team-taught by faculty members from Vassar and community colleges. More than seven hundred students participating in this program have successfully transferred to prestigious private liberal arts colleges as well as public universities.

There are other reasons to consider what is happening on community college campuses. Many of these colleges are using learning communities to deepen conceptual connections for first-time college students, to strengthen their social relationship to the college, and to prepare them for transfer to four-year schools, which the vast majority plan to attend. LaGuardia, one of the leaders in the second stage of the learning community movement, began developing paired and clustered courses in the mid-1970s. Currently it offers clusters for all incoming day liberal arts and sciences majors and for students specializing in one of several liberal arts options (theater and communication, media studies, labor and community organizing, and international studies). Other learning com-

munities offered to developmental and ESL students allow them to take college-level courses in conjunction with a developmental or ESL course. Consistently, students taking college-level courses in these learning communities outperform those who take the same courses in stand-alone sections, even though, technically, the ESL and developmental students are one to two courses behind those regularly enrolled.³ This success raises a final issue about the impact of learning communities on the future of the humanities. Well-designed learning communities can “break down barriers based on race, class and national origin” and promote “genuine exchange and collaboration across differences” (Lardner 8).

Learning communities can thus achieve the kind of hands-on value-added content that Amy Koritz calls for in *Profession 2005*: they can “address the social and cultural challenges facing students” and “educate effective and engaged citizens” (82, 85). At LaGuardia we address the question of interdisciplinarity directly, preparing students for democratic citizenship or, as we prefer to frame it, for global citizenship. Our clusters and pairs in the humanities and social sciences include courses in art history, American film, American history, anthropology, English, mass media, music, sociology, theater, philosophy, psychology, and urban studies; we are also branching into the hard sciences with clusters featuring biology and biochemistry, building the bridge Barbara Herrnstein Smith calls for between the humanities and the sciences. A cluster entitled “Re-packaging Paradise: Caribbean All-Inclusive” invites students to

survey the Caribbean region through its permutations from Amerindian homeland, to slave colony, colonial outpost, up to its current vogue as tourist destination. Through the literature, art, and social structures of the region’s four main cultural subsets (English, French, Dutch, and Spanish) the cluster examines the price exacted from the people and the land to fulfill the Euro/American quest for paradise. (Brown et al. 4)

In “Fighting for Our Rights: Students, Workers, Citizens and the Promise of American Democracy,” students examine key movements within particular periods of American history through readings in sociology and literature and respond to questions such as “What is the role of ideology or belief systems in the formation and growth of social movements? How have music, art, literature, philosophy, and theater contributed to the visibility and successes of social movements? What are the short- and long-term effects that social movements have had in shaping American society, politics, and culture?” (Clark and Cohen 6).

An examination of a single assignment in a first-semester learning community shows how students are invited to construct their own

knowledge by applying concepts from one discipline to another. In “Heroes, Gods, and Monsters: Classic Stories Then and Now,” a cluster linking courses in English, philosophy, and theater (the teachers are Hewitt, Koolsbergen, and van Slyck),⁴ students were asked to write an essay in response to the following questions: “What is Odysseus’s conception of personal identity or selfhood? How is Odysseus’s idea of the self consistent or inconsistent with ideas of selfhood you have encountered in philosophy?” Students answered these questions in a variety of ways, applying ideas of Plato, Descartes, Hume, and Locke to the world of the Greeks, to Odysseus’s character, to their own lives. One student uses the concept of selfhood to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Greek ideal:

It comes as no surprise that one of the greatest Greek heroes, Odysseus, has a “self” that the world knows him by, wily and cunning, a raider of cities, wise, all these attributes that essentially make Odysseus himself, and they never change. Is the Greek model one of the better models to judge the self by, considering it has almost no room for change? You are known by what you do and how you interact with the world, but then you are held to that model and change isn’t very likely to happen, not to mention that your reputation is essentially a perception made by the external world. (Lackhan)

Another student disagrees, finding process and change, a fluidity of selfhood—even in *The Odyssey*—to be connected to his understanding of Hume: “Hume feels that there is no ‘self’; that the self is the memory of the experiences one has had. The Greeks felt that a man is defined by the life he’s led. With his experiences in tow, he can begin to build himself through the eyes of others, through the stories told by them” (Fulcar). A third student finds Descartes’s idea of the self applicable to Odysseus, but he also sees a way to contrast the Greek idea of thinking and selfhood to that of Descartes:

Odysseus may be considered a “thinking thing” because he comes up with such thoughtful ideas that help him throughout his journey; however, the difference between the two men is that Descartes uses a method of breaking things down; Odysseus does not. Descartes wants knowledge, finding the truth about the self. Who are we? Odysseus does not think about this, but he really thinks about his fame: the truth of the self is based on *kleos* (glory) and *arête* (excellence). (Vargas)

Finally, reflecting on Hume’s notion of the constructed self through the lens of *The Odyssey*, a student, in a breakthrough moment, asks his own philosophical questions: “Who is to say that the self is something that is

only created by that same individual? Is it possible that a person can be made up of the impressions and thoughts of others?" (Fulcar).⁵

These are first-year college students who have either been educated in New York City public schools or who have come to LaGuardia from approximately 155 different countries. Many of them are still learning to articulate complex ideas in English. Yet their responses demonstrate the magical process by which students make ideas their own, trying them on conceptually in relation to *The Odyssey*, in relation to readings in philosophy, and, finally, in relation to themselves. As such, their writing vividly illustrates the value of studying the humanities. Whether we are functioning as students, educators, or scholars, or some combination of the three, we study the humanities for the breakthrough metacognitive moment of joy expressed by the student who asks, "Is it possible that a person can be made up of the impressions and thoughts of others?" When we forge new connections, when we see the deep relation between reading a text and living our lives, we are engaging in real interdisciplinarity.

The kind of thinking explicitly encouraged in learning communities—engaged, interdisciplinary thinking—realizes some of the goals presented in Davidson and Goldberg's "manifesto for the humanities" (57–59). For example, we want students to understand that "relationality reveals . . . that it provides insights and perspectives not otherwise available," that "social policy carries assumptions and values," and that (in an ideal world) there is "no privileged position for assessing knowledge" (58). We want to encourage students to critique arguments and cultural assumptions embedded in all kinds of texts and to recognize the humanities as "the principal (and for the most part principled) site of diversity and diversification in the academy" (59). Students in learning communities come to understand intellectual diversity and interdisciplinarity because of the way their learning is organized and because of the way they are encouraged to make active connections among disciplines. They are introduced to what will hopefully be a lifelong commitment to evaluating diverse perspectives so that a more global ideal of citizenship, involving both self-critique and an inclusive understanding of community, may be born.

Interdisciplinary thinking, as Davidson and Goldberg suggest, needs to happen throughout an institution; it needs to be something we believe is valuable for teaching, for student learning, for faculty development, as well as for scholarship. But at many institutions, dialogues about teaching are casual and anecdotal at best, not undertaken with a view to examining what really works, what improves or enhances learning for students. Conversations with colleagues across the country tell me that, in general, faculty members in the humanities (and perhaps throughout academe) often

do not have the time, or opportunity, to engage in sustained dialogue (especially interdisciplinary dialogue) with their peers. Outside centers for the humanities (where the dialogue may or may not include attention to effective pedagogies) interdisciplinary conversations are taking place in a broad range of institutions that have developed and sustained learning communities. Since many of these are community colleges, it is time to bring these institutions more directly into the conversation about interdisciplinarity and the future of the humanities.

THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING—RECONSIDERED

Perhaps one reason there has been little conversation in *Profession* about learning communities is that they are directly associated with an emphasis on pedagogy, about which there has been much debate in recent years. As John Guillory explains, there has been great concern about “the achievement of a parity between scholarship on literature and scholarship on the teaching of literature” (170). This observation brings me to a final issue that goes to the heart of needed changes in our attitudes, not only toward teaching but also toward scholarship in the humanities. In 1990, Boyer observed, “While we speak with pride about the great diversity of American higher education, the reality is that on many campuses standards of scholarship have become increasingly restrictive, and campus priorities frequently are more imitative than distinctive” (2). This complaint is echoed by Menand, who notes that “the profession is not reproducing itself so much as cloning itself” (13), for we continue to put pressure on junior faculty members to write certain kinds of dissertations, to practice safe scholarship, to produce publications in quantity rather than quality. The pressure to conform at the “highest” level has also prevented us from looking more closely at the scholarship of teaching. Learning communities, with their emphasis not only on interdisciplinarity but also on learner-centered pedagogies, have had an impact on professional scholarship, yet it is primarily the scholarship of teaching, the kind that has, historically, been marginalized (or simply not heard) by mainstream academe in the humanities.

At the same time, in recent years, there has been a fundamental shift in the expectations for faculty members teaching in community colleges. Many current job descriptions for such positions indicate that the doctorate is required, and new faculty members are expected to publish in order to earn tenure. Unlike many senior colleges, however, community colleges encourage and support the scholarship of teaching. But recognition and evaluation of this scholarship has been a complex task. As Jayne Marek reveals, actually piloting some of Boyer’s recommendations meets with con-

siderable difficulty, since faculty members continue to disagree about what constitutes legitimate scholarship (48–49). Guillory tackles this sticky issue in more theoretical depth, noting that while it is a good idea for “teachers of literature [to] study the teaching of literature as well as literature,” the “conceptual resources” in our primary fields “are sophisticated in a way that writing about the teaching of literature is not” (165). This is obviously an issue for a much larger conversation, but Guillory’s point is that there is a certain “thinness” in the scholarship of teaching and that for it to become more theoretical it must “liberate itself from the site of practice” (168).

Making the scholarship of teaching more rigorous is a worthy goal, but hopefully it can occur without the sacrifice of a strong focus on classroom evidence. The debate about the quality of this scholarship prevents us from considering other important benefits that derive from an attention to pedagogy: more extensive dialogue between junior and senior faculty members about teaching in our institutions, for example, a goal that is pressingly related to the vitality and future of the humanities. This is a time of great transition on our campuses: my English department has grown from a faculty of thirty to nearly fifty in the last six years, and, as we continue to hire, many senior colleagues are retiring. What is our responsibility to our junior colleagues as well as to the departments and institutions we have shaped from the 1970s through the 1990s? The development of a community of practice among junior faculty members, and an ongoing conversation between junior and senior faculty members, seems essential.

The LaGuardia Center for Teaching and Learning conducts a year-long Carnegie-style seminar for junior faculty members in which they examine their teaching, share ideas with others, and plan scholarly work from conference presentations to scholarly articles. That work includes articles on pedagogy. Similar seminars are conducted for faculty members developing writing-intensive courses in the disciplines and for those interested in expanding their use of technology and student e-portfolios. Such seminars enable new faculty members not only to form a community but also to take risks, to explore new methodologies. Last year, our Center for Teaching and Learning also initiated an in-house journal, *In Transit*, that features articles on teaching by LaGuardia faculty members.⁶ The journal has encouraged dialogue across disciplines about the scholarship of teaching.

REFLECTIONS: EMBRACING CHANGE

The resistance to the scholarship of teaching, to learning communities, and to the voices of community college faculty members comes down to the same thing: it is all about professional and intellectual status. Those

opposed to learning communities claim that these structures are a way of dumbing down the curriculum and turning a college or university into a high school, just as those opposed to rewarding the scholarship of teaching claim that it does not require the same level of rigor as academic scholarship in one's field of expertise. But how can we introduce increasing numbers of first-generation college students to the nature of academic work and the rigorous scholarship it entails without considering more deeply our teaching methodology? Our resistance to the scholarship of teaching, in other words, needs to be reconsidered in the light of a final disconnect: the current gap between low levels of literacy and the high level of theoretical discourse in individual fields in the humanities. At a time when cultural studies and literary theory agree on the complexity of the text—specifically, its instability, its nontransparency, its power to deconstruct cultural hegemonies—can we continue to insist that we don't need to examine student learning and to reflect on our pedagogical effectiveness? If being an intellectual means “thinking outside the parameters of a common culture and common sense—whether it's string theory or deconstruction” (Menand 16), then don't we need to encourage students to think outside the narrow disciplinarity that has governed academe since the beginning of the century? The contemporary French philosopher Alain Badiou argues that poets and mathematicians seek monsters—that is to say, new ideas that break open our conceptual frameworks—because it is through those monsters, through the “transgression of the law,” of the codes and values imposed by disciplines and cultures, that new ideas and insights emerge. These are moments of real interdisciplinarity.

Finally, what about dialogue among ourselves? How can we begin to have a more inclusive conversation about interdisciplinarity, about the scholarship of teaching, and about membership in our community? As a first step, perhaps centers for the humanities on our campuses need to expand their mission to include discussions of interdisciplinarity, of pedagogy, and of community—and perhaps they should invite not only distinguished colleagues from central spaces but also colleagues from the wings to share their knowledge. When my art history colleague Lawrence Waldron finished his presentation, many of us left with a more informed awareness of the way art collectors and museum designers shape our understanding. His argument that “museums need to consider more logical and intellectually coherent ways of organizing artifacts so that outdated notions of otherness are not reinforced” is applicable to our conversations within and across institutions about the future of the humanities. A real dialogue between junior and senior colleges, between public and private institutions, will lead us to a deeper understanding of

the possibilities of interdisciplinarity—and of the value of literature, and of the humanities, for life.

NOTES

1. For a partial listing of these institutions, see the directory of the Learning Communities National Resource Center, supported by the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education on the Evergreen State College Web site: www.evergreen.edu/washcenter/home.asp.

2. Between 2001 and 2002, 196,358 associate degrees were awarded in liberal arts and humanities (Phillippe and Sullivan 80). Source: Natl. Center for Educ. Statistics.

3. In most learning communities where a high-level ESL course is paired with a 100-level course, such as Introduction to Sociology, the ESL students “consistently obtained significantly higher grades in college-level and ESL courses taken in the learning community format” (Astone and Lenchner 2). Data over a three-year period (2001–04) also show that the aggregate pass rate is 7% higher for students taking English composition in a learning community than for those taking the course in a stand-alone version. And, parallel to the ESL students, college-level composition students earned higher grades taking the course in the learning community format (Astone).

4. The following faculty members designed and taught in the learning communities described in these pages: Victoria Brown, English; Terence Julien, anthropology; Lawrence Waldron, art history; J. Elizabeth Clark, English; Lorraine Cohen, sociology; Annie Hewitt, philosophy; William J. Koolsbergen, theater; Phyllis van Slyck, English. For a full description of LaGuardia’s learning communities, see www.lagcc.cuny.edu/lc.

5. My thanks to the following students from the fall 2005 liberal arts cluster, “Heroes, Gods, and Monsters: Classic Ideas Then and Now,” for permission to cite material from their essays: Christopher Lackhan, Jorge Vargas, and Gabriel Fulcar.

6. *In Transit* is edited by Gail Green-Anderson of the English department. For more information about the Center for Teaching and Learning at LaGuardia, directed by Bret Eynon, and about faculty development programs at LaGuardia, see www.lagcc.cuny.edu/ctl.

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