

**From:** LaGuardia 40th Anniversary  
**To:** Evelyn Almanzar; Everyone Group  
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**Subject:** December 5, 1970: LAGCC Naming Ceremony

December 5, 1970 is a day that marks a special moment in LaGuardia Community College's proud history: The College's naming ceremony took place, establishing Community College Number Nine as Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College, in honor of New York's most popular mayor, "The Little Flower." LaGuardia is, to this day, the only community college within CUNY to be named after such a prestigious historical figure; all other CUNY two-year colleges are named after their geographic locations. From the beginning, and in more than name only, we were destined to be unique.

Why Fiorello? Because no other 20th century American political figure embodies the LAGCC spirit: innovative, daring, idealistic and courageous.

Mayor LaGuardia was a staunch advocate for public higher education. "Advanced education today is a responsibility of government and something that every boy and girl should get," he said in 1939, nearly 30 years before CUNY instated open admissions and LAGCC was created to help meet the subsequent enrollment surge the University experienced.

As LaGuardia now is a national voice for the support and growth of public higher ed, so Fiorello supported the country's first tenure policy, recruited superior faculty for city colleges and raised the national profile of city colleges by selecting outstanding leaders for the NYC Board of Higher Education who eventually helped form CUNY.

His vision for public higher education in the city encompassed all the city's residents; it was his hope that future legislators would be city college alumni, not cronies of political machine bosses. He knew, as we LaGuardians do, that the students are our future.

You can view a historical photo from the ceremony and read the text of the naming proclamation on the LAGCC 40th anniversary website: [www.laguardia.edu/anniversary](http://www.laguardia.edu/anniversary).

In the picture, LaGuardia's Founding President Dr. Joseph Shenker (c.) holds the ceremonial scroll proclaiming the choice of our special name. Along with Dr. Frederick H. Burkhardt, the then Chairman of NYC Board of Education (l.), are two other longtime LAGCC advocates, Fiorello's widow, Marie LaGuardia and President of the LaGuardia Memorial Society and a former worker in Fiorello's administration, State Supreme Justice Eugene R. Canudo (r.).

Heartfelt thanks to Richard Lieberman and Douglas DiCarlo of the La Guardia and Wagner Archives for the photo and background information on this momentous event in LAGCC history. Visit the Archives in E238 or online at [http://www.la Guardiawagnerarchive.lagcc.cuny.edu/LAG\\_ARC\\_MAIN.aspx](http://www.la Guardiawagnerarchive.lagcc.cuny.edu/LAG_ARC_MAIN.aspx) to learn more about Mayor LaGuardia and listen to an oral history of Justice Canudo.

Special thanks also go to Marie Spina and Valerie Mazella-Lazides of the College's Institutional Archives for contributing not only archival material but also historical knowledge and unparalleled dedication to the College's 40th Anniversary projects and displays, and for the text of Dr. Burkhardt's speech at the ceremony, as well as a photo of the naming proclamation. Visit the Institutional Archives to learn more about many facets of LAGCC history: <http://library.la guardia.edu/services/archives>.