Middle College High wins ‘first ever’ Ford grant

The college’s solution to the city’s dropout crisis has been endorsed by the Ford Foundation under a first-of-its-kind $276,100 grant designed to replicate its Middle College High School in cities across the country.

The grant will permit the college to provide technical assistance to six colleges to develop similar collaborative programs over the next 14 months. The award will also fund research among Middle College graduates from the past ten years to evaluate the impact of their education on their lives.

The award came at a time when the foundation is seeking new approaches to resolve the dropout problem. It views high school/college collaborations as an important method for encouraging students to complete their education.

Middle College, an alternative high school sponsored jointly by the college and the Board of Education, has, over the past twelve years, won national acclaim for a program which accepts only potential dropouts and sees them graduated at rates far above the average for the system as a whole. Compared to the city-wide dropout rate of 40 percent, Middle College has a rate of only 15 percent.

“The college appreciates this major award by the Ford Foundation,” said President Shenker. “The foundation has funded a proposal to replicate a high school. We are pleased we can share the exciting ideas of Middle College with school districts and universities throughout the country.”

“The grant puts a major stamp of approval on the school by indicating that it’s worth replicating,” Middle College Principal Cecilia Cullen said.

To begin the process of choosing the six grant awardees, the college held a conference October 17 for 50 colleges which have expressed interest in adopting the Middle College model.

According to Project Director Dr. Janet Lieberman, who is a founder of Middle College and the president’s special assistant, the college hosted a conference October 17 for 50 colleges which have expressed interest in adopting the Middle College model.

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Steinway Exhibit opens

The rich history of the Steinway family, the dynasty which settled in New York over 100 years ago and went on to establish itself as the makers of the finest pianos in the world, is the subject of a traveling exhibit unveiled at the Steinway & Sons factory in Astoria September 16.

Dr. Richard K. Lieberman, exhibit director and head of the college’s LaGuardia Archives, told a group of some 50 invited guests that “the exhibit honors the workers and the contribution the family has made to New York City.”

John Steinway, great grandson of the company’s founder, pointed to an exhibit panel and told the gathering: “what needs to be said today is summarized in one headline—A Family Affair.”

Mr. Steinway, who started his career 47 years ago as an apprentice in the lumberyard, added: “It is the people that have made Steinway, for over a century and a third, an important American institution.”

The exhibit ceremony had added meaning because the day represented a milestone for the company. It marked the 133rd anniversary to the day that the company sold its first American-made piano. The piano went to a family named Griswold in Brooklyn. The piano, however, is now on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Continued on page four

LaGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE / CUNY / WINTER 1987
"It was what I had always dreamed of," said accounting major Audra Hamlett. "The dream: being a full-time student at an out-of-town college where she had the luxury of concentrating solely on her studies.

With the help of LaGuardia and Vassar College, Ms. Hamlett's dream came true last summer as she and 22 other LaGuardia students participated in an intensive five-week academic program at Vassar's Hudson Valley campus where their only responsibility was to tackle a challenging academic program.

"The LaGuardia/Vassar Summer Institute," said Dr. Janet Lieberman, the president's special assistant for educational collaboratives, "opened students' eyes to the many transfer opportunities they may choose from after they receive their associate degrees."

For five weeks, the LaGuardia students and seven Duchess County Community College students and one Ulster County Community College student took on the challenge of a demanding academic program that was especially designed by LaGuardia and Vassar faculty.

For many of these students, who ordinarily juggle their studies with responsibilities of family and work, the summer program enabled them to experience what it is like to be full-time academicians.

"They came to Vassar with no distractions," said Dr. Lieberman. "The experience made scholars out of them."

"It was here they were able to reach for the stars," said Project Director John Chaffee. "This special educational experience took place on a pastoral college campus in Poughkeepsie, New York. In sharp contrast to LaGuardia, Vassar is situated on 1,000 acres of finely-groomed lawns, trees, lakes and 100 buildings, some of which date back to the 1860s when the liberal arts college was founded.

The students were required to choose two of four courses that were team taught by LaGuardia, Vassar, and Duchess County faculty members. Participating in the program from LaGuardia were Professor John Hyland, of the Social Science Department, who taught a course on the sociology and geography of the communities of the Hudson Valley area, and Professor Gilbert Muller, of the English Department, who taught a literature and political science class.

"The courses were very challenging," said Jason Schulterbrandt, a liberal arts and science major, who enrolled in the genetics and ethics class, along with the computer course.

To stay abreast of the taxing workload, Mr. Schulterbrandt explained that within the first week students organized study groups for each class.

"They were organized out of need," said Ray Molina, a science major. In the genetics and ethics study group, Mr. Molina explained that he and Jason, who were both strong in the sciences, helped students who did not have a background in biology, while other students, such as Fran Ferone, who understood the philosophy assignments, explained them to the others.

The institute, which was kicked off in the summer of 1985, was spurred by a $225,000 Ford Foundation grant awarded to the college to design a program to encourage two-year minority college graduates to transfer to senior colleges. The program has proved successful in achieving its main goal: showing students that there are possibilities beyond the public senior college. Some students are already planning to apply to private institutions.

"The difference now, after participating in the program," said Ms. Alvarado, who hopes to transfer to Princeton, "is that I know I have the opportunity to choose."

LaGuardia students who participated in the LaGuardia/Vassar program are (left to right): Arlene Alvarado, Ed Miller, Laura Steptuk, and Jason Schulterbrandt.
Columbia University’s Teachers College has incorporated LaGuardia’s Integrated Skills Reinforcement project into a doctoral program this fall, marking the first time the nationally acclaimed faculty development course is being taught at the graduate level.

Over the years, the ISR program has gained recognition for training subject area faculty to help underprepared college students use language as a tool for advancing their thinking skills in content areas.

“ISR has been proven to be an effective instructional method,” said a Columbia University spokesperson. “We believe that it will become an important component in our curriculum.”

The two-course ISR sequence will be added to Columbia’s College Teaching and Academic Leadership Program, a two-year-old doctoral curriculum program focusing on college teaching and academic leadership in higher education. The program was designed specifically to meet the needs of candidates who already hold faculty and administrative positions in higher education.

English Professor Harvey Wiener, one of the ISR project developers and trainers, is teaching the introductory course at Teachers College, and other LaGuardia faculty, in other terms, will be working in the program.

The cooperation between the two institutions signifies an important alliance—a public community college and a private graduate institution—joining together to tackle a pervasive problem: how to teach poorly prepared students complex content courses.

“Nowhere, not even in teacher colleges, are educators taught how to teach the underprepared student,” said ISR Project Coordinator and Director JoAnn Anderson. “They come to their jobs with their PhDs, briefcases, and a vast knowledge of their disciplines—but that is not enough.”

The theory behind LaGuardia’s approach is that for students to understand the content of a particular discipline, they have to possess the language skills required for the subject.

“Language is the means to content,” said Dr. Nora Eisenberg, an ISR project developer. “And content is the context for developing language skills.”

“What the ISR-based course teaches educators,” said Dr. Anderson, “is how to successfully impart knowledge of the content area to their students by developing the students’ language skills.”

The ISR courses at Teachers College will be taught in the workshop format that is characteristic of the ISR program. The teachers will work in small interdisciplinary groups to review each others’ materials, discuss problems, and explore instructional methods.

“This type of group process,” said Dr. Anderson, “allows faculty to benefit from brainstorming, peer critiquing, and listening and reviewing oral presentations. A unique feature of the program is that teachers will come away with a learning guide they can use in the classroom.”

The implementation course, which follows the introductory course, will provide teachers with an opportunity to pilot-test their newly developed materials and to assess how effective they are when implemented at their home campuses.

Teachers who take this course will also have the option of using their work as the basis of a dissertation.

The collaborative effort with Columbia grew out of a long-term relationship. Since the conception of the college’s ISR program in 1977, Columbia has been involved as an outside evaluator.

The ISR program was initially developed by LaGuardia faculty for LaGuardia faculty when the college began to take a hard look at the learning problems that prevented many of the college’s students from understanding the materials covered in the various disciplines.

Dr. Anderson explained that even the development of a comprehensive basic skills program was not enough to prepare the students adequately for the demands of the coursework.

Teachers discovered that although the students got through the basic skills courses, those skills were so new, they were unable to fully apply them to the difficult materials in content courses. As a result, teachers were forced to present reading materials orally instead of assigning the reading of core work. They relied on personalized discussion instead of having students draw upon knowledge based on the literature. And they used multiple choice questions instead of using written essay exams.

Vice President Martin Moed responded by charging a group of faculty with the task of developing classroom strategies to foster the successful application of students’ language abilities to the learning of course content. The group, which included Professors Anderson, Eisenberg, John Holland, Wiener, Carol Rivera-Kron, and John Chapman, worked with colleagues throughout the college to identify the effective teaching strategies that now form the hub of the training program.

“ISR has proved to be a bridge between teaching basic skills and providing a full and enriching liberal education,” Dr. Anderson said. Today over 75 percent of LaGuardia’s faculty have been trained in the ISR approach.

Assessments have revealed a significant improvement in student achievements using ISR methods. For example, in an ISR math pilot project that was developed...
Continued from page one
Museum of Art in Manhattan.

The ten-panel exhibit, created by the college in conjunction with Steinway & Sons, tells the story of the German family who brought its special craft to America, of the immigrant workers who created the extraordinary instruments, of the development of the Steinway Village in what is now Astoria, and of the impact of these influences on the economic growth of the borough.

The exhibit also takes a special look at the piano that has become a national treasure. Displayed are illustrations of the company’s technical innovations which helped make its piano an instrument of such fine quality, as well as photographs of an exceptional group of pianos—the custom-made art case pianos.

"By developing the themes of family, factory, and technology," said Dr. Lieberman, "the exhibit mixes three levels of history: the piano factory and its workers, the history of New York, and a chapter in the history of corporate America."

The story unfolds through a collection of family photographs and documents accompanied by a narrative. The saga of the family and factory is also told through audio tapes of John Steinway and Andrew Kneuer, a former Steinway employee. Mr. Steinway talks about the family, his perspective of the factory, and the development of the company. Mr. Kneuer describes his years as a Steinway worker.

The exhibit begins in 1850, when the family left Germany and settled in New York City, where the Steinways planned to establish a piano company. To gain an understanding of the New York City ways, Henry Steinway and four of his sons worked for an established piano maker until 1853, when they rented a store on Manhattan’s Varick Street and thus began the partnership of Steinway & Sons.

According to the exhibit, the company experienced immediate success, and in 1860, left its rented space and opened the “Pianoforte Manufactory” at Fourth Avenue (now Park) and 53rd Street. But by 1870 the business outgrew its Manhattan location and the Steinways looked across the river to Queens, where land was abundant and inexpensive.

In this sparsely developed borough, the family purchased a 400-acre site on Bowery Bay in what is now Astoria and built “Steinway Village.” Within the boundaries of the self-contained community were the family mansion, worker housing, and the piano factory. The village also had its own post office, kindergarten, library, public baths and parks, and a ferry company.

As the family made its mark in Queens, its piano quickly gained international recognition as a musical instrument that was synonymous with excellent quality.
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The exhibit explains that in the Nineteenth Century, when European standards of culture were deemed higher than those in America, the Steinways set out to earn Europe's respect by winning international competitions. They captured first prize in London in 1862, a grand gold medal in Paris in 1867, and first prize at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876.

"The medals ensured international fame, sales to royalty, and the approval of the world's greatest pianists," said Dr. Lieberman. Some famous families that purchased the pianos during this period were Grand Duke Alexander of Russia and Baron Nathaniel von Rothschild. Some eminent musicians of that period who were Steinway pianists included Ignace Paderewski, Anton Rubinstein, and Josef Hofmann.

The story of the Steinway workers is a profile of European immigrants, who, like their employer, came to America with specialized skills. The exhibit indicates that each ethnic group joining the company specialized in a particular job. For example, the German craftsmen created the piano cases, the Hungarians worked in the foundries, and the Norwegians were the soundboard makers.

In looking at the company's workforce, the exhibit highlights one family of workers who contributed to the company's fame. Spanish immigrant Juan Ayuso, a master craftsman, carved the first White House piano in 1903 for President Theodore Roosevelt. One of his sons, Severo, in 1938, carved the second White House piano for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. And another son, Eugene, became the art director and designer for the company.

"What the exhibit points out," said Dr. Lieberman, "is that the piano is a combination of the talents and tradition of the old world and the creative spirit and technological progress of the new world. The history of Steinway & Sons is a history of the American worker and American enterprise."

Another facet of the piano the exhibit highlights is the company's special art case piano. Between 1885 and 1930, over 200 custom-made art case pianos, with their exquisitely carved and meticulously hand-painted cabinetry, were designed.

"The Steinway piano is one of our few national treasures," said Dr. Lieberman. "We sometimes wonder now what happened to the Yankee know-how of the Nineteenth Century. Well, it still exists at the Steinway factory."

Photos top left to right: an art case piano, Paris Exposition Medal, and a company employee. Bottom left to right: family mansion, factory worker, and William Steinway.
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Photos top left to right: an art case piano, Paris Exposition Medal, and a company employee. Bottom left to right: family mansion, factory worker, and William Steinway.
Perspective

Mentor program targets 'high-risk' students

A faculty mentoring program for incoming freshmen has been instituted this fall in an attempt to reduce the rate of attrition among students.

According to Coordinator Jon Saul, the project will target freshmen identified as having the highest incidence of attrition.

He cited studies which show that the last 1,000 students admitted to the Fall class have an 18 percent greater chance of dropping out by the end of the Spring semester than students admitted before that period.

"We think this particular group tends to enroll in the college with less thought about the commitment required for success," Mr. Saul said. "Suddenly, they find themselves in college but without the mastery of necessary academic skills, as well as such basic skills as decision making, time management, interpersonal communication, and study skills."

The mentoring project is designed to remedy this tendency among late admits by pairing 300 high-risk students with faculty and staff volunteers who will be responsible for helping the students adjust to the new academic environment.

"Through the program," said Mr. Saul, "the college hopes to enhance student performance and to improve the overall quality of the educational experience at LaGuardia."

The volunteers, representing every academic and administrative area of the college, will each be assigned three students. The mentor will contact students weekly to learn whether they need direct help or a referral to an appropriate advisor or instructor.

For example, a mentor could help a student master the complexities of the financial aid process, or describe the grading system, or explain that the place for some extra help with logarithms is the math lab.

"The mentor is a special friend who knows and cares," Mr. Saul said. "He or she is a person whom a student can ask a question they may be afraid to ask someone else."

In preparation for their new roles as mentors, volunteers will attend an orientation session, followed by regularly scheduled support group meetings where they can share ideas and discuss problems.

The project represents the most recent strategy by the college to bolster its retention rate. The college already provides a broad range of support systems, such as counseling and advisement, designed to combat attrition. "But we discovered the attrition problem goes beyond the scope of our current support systems. The mentoring project is an attempt to augment these other programs," Mr. Saul said.

"Why students opt to leave is a difficult question to answer because there is no single criterion," Mr. Saul continued. "Many students transfer to other colleges, or find employment, or make a more realistic career choice, while others leave because of personal problems."

To assess the impact on the attrition, Mr. Saul explained, the students will be carefully monitored. "If the program proves successful, we will expand it to other high-risk students. Ideally, we would like to match every student with a faculty mentor."

Grant aim: replication

Continued from page one

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"The students come to us with a record of long-term absences or emotional and social problems stemming from a home environment that makes it difficult for them to cope in a traditional high school," Dr. Lieberman said. "Guided by a belief that every student has the potential to succeed, we supply them with an educational setting where they can make it," she said."

The track record is impressive. Despite the high risk composition of the student body, which totals approximately 460 students, about 85 percent graduate. Of these, 75 percent go on to college—at LaGuardia or elsewhere.

One important success factor, said Dr. Lieberman, is small class size which permits individualized instruction. The academic program is another factor. Although the school follows the curriculum established by the New York City Board of Education, Dr. Lieberman noted that within the requirements there are a lot of choices that give students a feeling of some control over their educational plan.

Also integrated into the curriculum is a cooperative education program patterned after the college's own internship program.

"Cooperative education is an important factor motivating students," Dr. Lieberman said. "It lets young people see the adult world and begin to understand the value of education."

Other key ingredients are a concerned faculty and a strong counseling program. "Students gain a feeling from faculty members and counselors that someone really wants them to succeed," Dr. Lieberman said.

Dr. Lieberman indicated that having a high school situated on a college campus, where students have access to the college facilities and can interact with college students, also adds to the positive educational experience.

"We treat students as if they were college students," said Dr. Lieberman, "and that seems to make a big difference."
Kids' stuff, concerts highlight theater season

The college's 1986-87 theater season has opened with a diverse cultural program that blends film and theater for children, and concerts and dance for adults.

The children's theater series kicked off October 12th and 25th with the Bubbles Players, a Hispanic-American theater company which made mythology come alive with the help of masks and costumes.

The exciting world of books will be revealed to the young audience as The Readers Theatre Workshop on November 22nd tells animal stories from around the world through a combination of song, dance, and mime.

The internationally acclaimed Little Theatre of the Deaf will make its third appearance at the college on January 17th. The unique children's troupe, which is made up of both deaf and hearing actors, tells stories and jokes using spoken words and sign language, as well as mime and dance.

And the magic of mime will also be performed by the Mimestrals on March 14th.

On Saturday afternoons, the college will lower the theater's movie screen for the children's film festival. Featured will be eight full-length cartoons and movies that will appeal to children of all ages.

The Muppets opened the movie season on October 18 with "Muppets Take Manhattan."

The musical version of "Tom Sawyer" will be shown on November 15, followed by "Yellow Submarine," the Beatles' animated musical, which is scheduled for December 20.

"Matilda," a comedy about a boxing kangaroo, with Elliot Gould and Robert Mitchum, is scheduled for January 10, and "Sounder," a nominee of four Academy Awards, starring Cicely Tyson and Paul Winfield, who dramatize the story of a family's struggle and success during the Depression, will be shown on February 7.

"Born Free," the tender and exciting story of Elsa, the lion cub, is scheduled for March 21. Bugs Bunny will tell about his life in the cartoon world on April 25 in the "Bug Bunny-Road Runner" movie starring the renowned rabbit, Elmer Fudd, Daffy Duck, and the Road Runner. And "What's Up Doc," a comedy starring Barbra Streisand and Ryan O'Neal, will be shown on May 16.

The college is presently developing the adult cultural program, which will focus on concerts and dance, for the second half of the season. Already scheduled for May will be the college's sixth annual international dance festival, which provides folkloric and traditional dance from a host of foreign countries. For the past five years, the all-day fest has been the only one of its kind in Queens.

ISR is ‘bridge’ to skills

Continued from page three

The college has also developed a joint effort with its Middle College High School. In the past five years, over 30 percent of its teachers have been trained.

"I believe it is the best thing we ever did," said Middle College Principal Cecilia Cullen.

Based on the success of the Middle College effort, the college has proposed the establishment of an instructional training program at several local high schools.

"The college administration agrees," said Dr. Anderson, "that more than ever, all educational communities must cooperate if students are to learn more effectively at each level and to move more successfully from one institution to the other and beyond."
**Schools President Wagner is Commencement speaker**

President of the New York City Board of Education Robert Wagner, Jr., at the college's 14th annual Commencement exercises, described the college as "the best of New York City" and a major force in bridging the gap between the city's rich and poor citizens.

"LaGuardia represents what education should be about in New York City," said keynote speaker Mr. Wagner to the 3,400 graduates, faculty, and guests who attended the September 14th graduation ceremony at Colden Auditorium.

He applauded the college's mission to provide a quality education, its cooperative partnership with the city's corporate community, and its Middle College and International High Schools.

The recently appointed president of the Board of Education also declared that LaGuardia has an important role in erasing the economic division that exists in the city. Describing New York as actually two cities—one rich and one poor—Mr. Wagner said LaGuardia provides "an answer to the problem," by giving people an education that will help them improve their economic condition.

"LaGuardia and the school system," he said, "can help make New York one city."

Queens Borough President Claire Shulman, in her remarks, also lauded the college, saying, "LaGuardia has been at the cutting edge of innovation in education."

Along with saluting its graduates, the college also named Evangeline Gouletas-Carey the recipient of its President's Medal—the highest award presented at commencement. The prestigious award was bestowed upon Mrs. Carey for her support of the college and for her role in organizing the college's first major fundraising effort—the LaGuardia Tradition Dinner—which was held last February at the Waldorf Astoria.

In presenting Mrs. Carey with the award, President Shenker said, "her involvement in this event, unique in this country for a community college, literally made the impossible become possible."

The gala event attracted over 500 leaders from the business, political, and cultural communities, and raised an estimated $80,000.

Upon receiving the award, Mrs. Carey encouraged the graduates to continue their hard work, to strive for excellence in everything they do. "Above all, remember that education will always be the key to your success," she said.

Three cooperative education employers received an award for their participation in the program. The organizations were: James Talcott Factors, Inc., The Office of the Comptroller of the City of New York, and R. R. Bowker.

Student Government President Daisy Rodriguez was the recipient of the LaGuardia Memorial Association Award. Holding the award in her hand, a tearful Ms. Rodriguez told the audience, "this is the type of college LaGuardia is, a place where anyone can come and become somebody."

Evangeline Gouletas-Carey, President's Medal recipient; and Robert Wagner, Jr., President, Board of Education, Commencement keynote speaker.