Setting the Record Straight
A commentary by President Raymond C. Bowen

At a time when the federal government is strongly supporting community colleges, our mission is being questioned on the local level. This is occurring not only in New York City, but also in at least two other urban regions of the country. Recently, the chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District resigned due to lack of funding for his colleges. In Chicago, the chancellor's contract was not renewed because some believed that underprepared students were not being "mainstreamed" quickly enough. These two districts enroll more than 300,000 students. New York City's community colleges enroll more than 65,000 students.

In responding to these criticisms, we in community colleges generally react by using anecdotes rather than statistics...i.e. "I know of a welfare recipient who was a triple-remedial student and recently received a Ph.D. from Harvard." While such feats are admirable, they reveal little about the nearly eight million community college students nationwide, or the tens of thousands of community college students in New York City. We, at LaGuardia, must continually review our remedial, ESL and other programs to insure that our standards are unquestionable. Additionally, we must respond to the alleged grade inflation in some of our courses. Only then can we demonstrate to our critics that access and quality are not antithetical.

Recently, our director of Institutional Research presented data that demonstrates that we at LaGuardia Community College are indeed responding to the needs of our constituents. However, we also realize we must constantly strive to improve.

The following statistics demonstrate that we are on the right track:

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Program Successfully Leads Small Businesses to $30 Million in Government Contracts

As she watched her failing six-year-old employment and training agency sink precipitously into debt, Rosa Bennett decided that she would try one last strategy before admitting defeat. She signed up for a course that promised to teach her and other minority, women, and small business owners the secret behind successfully competing for government contracts.

Six years later, with well over $13 million in government and private contracts to her name, Ms. Bennett is very happy that she decided to attend the Preparing for Profit program, jointly run by LaGuardia's Division of Adult and Continuing Education, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and Coopers & Lybrand. In that short time, she not only turned her Rockland County/New York City-based employment and training agency around but expanded her services to include a data processing and telecommunications technical department.

"This course saved my life," Ms. Bennett told a group of PREP graduates attending a recent annual graduation reception hosted by Coopers & Lybrand where she and two other successful PREP participants were being inducted into the program's Million Dollar Project.

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Early Language Immersion Program for Foreign-Born High Schoolers

In an effort to build the language skills of foreign-born youngsters, LaGuardia is conducting a year-round English language immersion program for ninth graders. The program, which is a collaborative effort between The City University of New York and the New York City Board of Education, is designed to strengthen youngsters' command of English by immersing them in a well-rounded reading and writing experience. New York City Tech in Brooklyn is also participating.

"Through this early intervention program that focuses on reading and writing," said Ellen Quish, the program's education director...
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- A majority of students at LaGuardia achieve their educational objectives: degree attainment, transfer to senior college, continued persistence toward the degree, and entrance into the workforce. With these objectives, LaGuardia students succeed at a rate of 52 percent over a five-year period.

- The graduation rate at LaGuardia is far higher than the national average. A study released in 1997 by the U.S. Department of Education reports the national average of associate degree attainment after five years is 19 percent. At LaGuardia it is 26 percent.

- LaGuardia students meet the community college objectives of degree attainment and preparation for further study. A LaGuardia education also raises students' earning power significantly, and with it the potential for a higher household income. In 1995, it was reported that undergraduates received an average total household income of $18,000. The 1995 graduates, surveyed within six months of graduation, reported an average salary of $25,000.

- LaGuardia students who register for a full schedule of classes in every term of the first two years, show remarkable rates of goal attainment. Time remains a factor, however. The percentage of graduates after two, three, four, and five years varied according to academic preparation. Nonetheless, the average graduation rate after five years for students who attended full-time for the first two years was 57 percent, including students who needed remediation. An additional nine percent transferred to a CUNY senior college before graduation and, as estimated from surveys, another 10 percent transferred to a college outside CUNY. This means a total of 76 percent of this group, after five years, attained the goal of either graduation or transfer.

- Less than one-third of entering students take a full schedule of classes during the initial two-year period. As they continue to pursue their degrees, most students fluctuate between full and part-time schedules, skip whole semesters periodically, or both.

- As a consequence, two years is not enough time for most students to earn an associate's degree. But LaGuardia graduation rates rise steadily with each additional year. After two years, the percentage of graduates averages only three percent, but after three years, the rate is 13 percent, after four years, 21 percent, and after five years, 26 percent.

- LaGuardia ranks second in the country in graduating Hispanic students, third in the country in graduating minority students as a single group, and sixth in the country in graduating African-American students ("100 Top Associate Degree Producers," Community College Week, July 1996).

- Given the time, all students at LaGuardia, including those least prepared for college at the time of entry, succeed at rates that are higher than the national average for community colleges. After five years, LaGuardia's graduation rate for students who needed the most remediation at entry was 24 percent. An additional six percent of this group went on to CUNY senior colleges before graduating from LaGuardia.

Again and again, LaGuardia Community College is noted for its tradition of innovation and quality. I hope that you are as proud as I am. Express your support for our exciting institution!

An eclectic lineup of performances for both adult and young theatergoers is scheduled for the 1988 theater season of the college's Performing Arts Center.

For children, a variety of professional groups will bring classical and original works to life.

Giant puppets and masked characters will tell the dramatic tale of The Parable of the Great Fish on May 3. Accompanied by live music, the Arm-of-the-Sea Theater will take the audience on an adventure where it will discover the "Hammer of Invention," the "Horn of Inspiration," the "Mirror of Self Awareness," and the "Basket of Elements."

The tale of Paul Bunyan, the larger-than-life character of American folklore, will be told by the New York City Opera on May 16. With musical influences from Broadway, Victorian ballads, and folk songs, the company will tell the "tall-tale" fable of this frontier figure.

Original works by children will be showcased by the Child's Play Touring Theatre on May 17. The troupe takes pieces of literature written by the winners of its "Create-a-Story Contest" and transforms them into little vignettes.

For adult tastes, the college will be presenting in June a five-day festival featuring the original works by playwrights from Queens. The series will be judged by professional directors, casting directors, drama critics, and a representative from Samuel French Publications. The event will run from June 4 through the 8th.

Gospel music will be the focus of a fest on June 11, when award-winning artists Daryl and Diana Doleman take the stage. Also spotlighted will be the Antioch Mass Choir of the Antioch Baptist Church of Corona. The Dolemans were the winners of the 1997 Artist of the Year Award given by WWDJ 970 AM.

LPAC Spotlights Spring Series

For ticket information, call the box office at ext. 5151.
Middle College High School Recognized as One of Best Government Programs in U.S.

Middle College High School has received a Ford Foundation Innovations in American Government Award for its success in encouraging "at-risk" youngsters to graduate high school and to pursue a college degree.

The nationally acclaimed alternative high school was among 25 government programs awarded a $20,000 grant that will be used to disseminate program materials to select target groups interested in adopting the model. Over 1,500 programs throughout the nation applied for the grant.

The foundation's 12-year-old award, which is administered by Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in partnership with the Council of Excellence in Government, identifies programs that are striving to solve important public problems and encourages them to replicate their programs.

"Each program has made a commitment to investing in and improving the lives of its constituency," said Alan Altshuler, director of the Innovations program at the Kennedy School. "We feel that this year's awardees exemplify at its best the trend of government reinventing itself to provide quality services for all Americans."

In response to the high school's award, Cecilia Cunningham, principal of Middle College, said: "As a 23-year-old collaborative with the New York City Public Schools, Middle College is delighted to be recognized as an alternative high school that spearheaded a national movement for high school-college collaboratives to provide access for 'at-risk' youngsters to college."

Dr. Janet Lieberman, the high school's founder, explained that when LaGuardia and the Board of Education established Middle College in 1974 as a way to reverse the high drop-out rate in the city's public high schools, our goal "was to create a nurturing, academically challenging environment to ensure high school completion and success in college and beyond."

What they created was a small, 500-student high school that was built on a number of innovative features, such as location on a college campus, a cooperative education component, 70-minute classroom periods, and a strong guidance program, which sets it aside from the city's traditional public high schools.

The high school's success in educating over 6,000 students since its inception is measured in its impressive student graduation and college enrollment records. Ninety-five percent of its seniors graduate and 78 percent go on to college, which is twice the national average and higher than the New York City-wide rate of 75 percent and the alternative high school rate of 60 percent.

For Middle College, the task of replicating its model is not an alien one. For the past 12 years, Middle College has been assisting high schools and colleges in adopting the program into their learning environment. In 1984, the New York State Legislature voted to grant monies to the City University of New York to support the replication of the Middle College model at four additional CUNY colleges. LaGuardia established its second Middle College—International High School—while Brooklyn College, Bronx Community College, and Hostos Community College opened their first. Beyond CUNY, there are 20 spinoffs located around the country.

The high school was able to take its replication effort one step further when the Pew Charitable Trusts and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund leant its support to the establishment of the Middle College Consortium. The national network, which is made up of 20 middle colleges, allows its members to exchange ideas and provide technical resources to schools wishing to replicate the model.

"With the $20,000 gift," said Ms. Cunningham, "we will be able to enhance our ability to spread the word on this innovative educational approach and to assist and to lend our expertise to high schools and colleges that feel their student population will benefit from this paradigm."
PREP Course Profits Small Business Owners

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Club. “It taught me how to network and how to fight the bureaucracy.”

Since the intensive four-session program was launched in 1991, over 900 small business owners have gone through it in hopes of learning how to negotiate the labyrinthian process of applying for lucrative government and private contracts. According to Ben Hunt, director of the program, graduates have won an estimated $30 million in contracts.

“Since its inception six years ago, PREP has been very successful in achieving its goal,” said President Raymond C. Bowen, who brought the idea of an academic–public-private partnership such as PREP from Tennessee where he established a similar program while president of Shelby State Community College in Memphis. “As the program gains in maturity, we expect to see more graduates join the club each year.”

During four all-day Saturday classes, the students are taught everything there is to know about contracts and running a successful business by representatives from the MTA and Coopers and Lybrand.

“The four major lessons you come away with are certification, networking, marketing, and accounting,” said Ms. Bennett.

In understanding the intricacies of competing for government and private contracts, an MTA contract manager walks the students through the process. The students learn that the first step in this involved bidding process is to apply for minority business certification to individual government, quasi-government, and private agencies.

“I am certified for everything, even dog kennels,” Ms. Bennett jokingly said as she rattled off some of the agencies she is certified with including the MTA, The City of New York, The Small Business Administration, New York City Transit, the Governor’s office, and over 100 private firms.

Once she was recognized as a minority-owned business, Ms. Bennett said the contracts started to come in. Her first was a contract with the MTA where she supplied personnel to a company as a subcontractor. “The contract was for less than $100,000, but to me it was $10 million,” she said. Other awards include an on-going $12 million basic order agreement with the United States Navy to provide a full gamut of telecommunications and computer services from wiring their system to placement and training. There is a $1.3 million contract with the United States Army to replace the phone system in the Veteran’s Hospital in Alaska, and a $125,000 annual grant from Housing and Urban Development to retrain their employees throughout the Northeast region. The contract was awarded in 1995 and is still active.

“Without this program, you would not know all the things you don’t know about business” she said.

Theresa Aiello, another Million Dollar Club inductee, was one of those students who did not know. As president of Manhattan Transfer Transit, a 15-year-old company that provides transportation service for pre-kindergarten youngsters, she was interested in applying for contracts but did not know how to go about doing it.

“PREP instructors gave us names of agencies and walked us through the process,”

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Foreign Students Begin Language Immersion in High School

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director, “we are giving youngsters whose first language is not English a head start in their studies and a better chance at succeeding in high school and beyond.”

One Saturday each month, seventy 14-year-olds from high schools around the city spend six hours strengthening their command of English by reading a collection of novels and short stories and completing writing assignments that focus on the readings as well as individual and group research projects.

Ms. Quish said the students will have read at least five or six novels focusing on the broad theme of “transitions” and will have completed extensive writing assignments by the end of June.

The students will also have a choice of attending two elective classes, such as health, video making, computers, poetry, drama and stage craft, which were developed based on the students’ interests.

The fledgling immersion program kicked off last summer when 103 eighth grade graduates from bilingual and ESL classes opted to prepare for the rigors of ninth grade by enrolling in an intensive six-week program on the Long Island City campus.

Seventy of those students have decided to remain in the program throughout the school year.

During the summer program, the students spent the first part of the academic day in reading and writing classes that centered around the theme “Summer in New York City.” By the end of the course, the students read Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger and The Friends by Rosa Guy, and were involved in writing exercises that were tied to the readings.

“Every day there was at least one entry placed in the journals they were keeping,” said Ms. Quish, “as well as weekly compositions on independent topics.”

The remainder of the day was spent working on group projects where students were asked to identify questions they had about New York City and carry out an investigation to answer those queries.

“By having students investigate their questions, they became familiar with the research process through orientations and visits to the college library and archives, use of the Internet, and by interviewing sources,” said Ms. Quish.

Two students, for example, who are interested in becoming lawyers, decided that they wanted to learn more about the city’s court system. Their fact-finding mission took them to a local courthouse where they interviewed a judge, a law clerk, and other individuals who were able to give them firsthand information on how the system runs.

To further prepare the students for their research projects and better acquaint them with the city, the teachers led four field trips. The students cruised Manhattan on the Circle Line, and visited the Queens Museum, the Metropolitan Museum, and Sony IMAX where they viewed New York in 3D. 

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LaGuardia Places Students on Public Assistance in On-campus Jobs

To help students on public assistance stay in school and fulfill the state and federal governments’ strict work requirements, LaGuardia is conducting a program that allows students to be placed in jobs on campus.

Over 30 full-time students who are on Home Relief and Aid to Families with Dependent Children are participating in the college’s Work Experience Program, which allows the students to work an average of 20 hours a week at a variety of jobs on the college’s campus.

WEP Helps Students Meet New Welfare Requirements

The purpose of the college’s program is to make it easier for students to satisfy the new welfare bill, which requires able-bodied adults to work in order to receive assistance, while they are pursing their associate’s degree.

“By eliminating the time students spend traveling to their jobs,” said Sonia Pearson, director of Personnel and coordinator of the program, “we are making life a little bit easier for these students and helping them to continue their education.”

Audrey Harrigan-Lamont, director of the college’s College Opportunity to Prepare for Employment, a credit-bearing program for adults receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children, supports that claim.

“The COPE students I interviewed for WEP assignments are eager to work, but they do not want it to interfere with completing their college studies,” she said. “These are people who have a vision to get a degree and the marketable skills needed to secure a job that will lead to financial independence. The college’s work experience program allows students to hold on to that vision.”

Kamilah McFarlane, a human services major and a workforce participant, explained that if she did not have her WEP assignment on campus she probably would not be able to complete her studies. “With 20 hours of work each week, a full-time academic schedule, a two-year-old child, and on top of that, an hour and a half commute to LaGuardia from Brooklyn,” she said, “I would not be able to handle the load.”

Another way the program accommodates the students is by setting up a flexible work schedule around the adults’ class hours and permitting them to work early mornings, evenings, and weekends.

In developing her schedule, Ms. McFarlane said that she sat down with her supervisor, Luis Merchant of Student Life and Development, and they designed a doable schedule around her classes.

“He is extremely accommodating,” she said, “and very sensitive to my situation.”

Other obstacles that are dealt with are transportation expenses to and from the school and child care.

The jobs, developed by the college and approved by the Human Resources Administration, which oversees the city’s workforce program, fall under three broad job titles—clerical/research aide, computer/technical aide, and operations aide.

“In developing the jobs, we wanted to make sure that the students would come away with real skills that could be applied in the business world,” said Ms. Pearson.

And whenever possible, she explained that the college tries to place students in jobs that are related to their field of study. Daisy Cortez, a human services major who is interested in a career in the mental health field, has been placed at the college’s health center where she is involved in educating the student population on AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

“The best thing about the program is that my work assignment is related to my major,” said Ms. Cortez. “I can apply my experience here toward my career goals.”

In identifying job sites on campus, the personnel office canvassed the academic and administrative areas in the college to see which divisions and departments were interested in participating and the jobs they could offer students.

“We have the full cooperation of every area in the college,” said Ms. Pearson, “and will have no problem placing the maximum number of students in jobs.”

For example, Eileen Murray, director of Administrative and Support Services, opted to participate in the program and presently supervises several WEP students. She oversees students who are working in offices as secretaries and clerical aides, on the maintenance staff, and on the loading dock, and plans to place others in the college’s print shop.

Language Immersion

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“Each of the trips was connected with what they were researching and helped give them a different perspective of the city,” said Ms. Quish. “It was not ‘let’s go somewhere for a day’ and not have any follow-up.”

Although there is no conventional assessment of the students’ progress, Ms. Quish pointed out that there were other monitors that evaluated the students work.

“Assessment is on-going,” she said. “Everything they write is responded to in writing by the teachers and a portfolio containing all their writings is sent to their high schools.”

She added that although emphasis is on qualitative evaluation, every student during the summer received a grade based on their motivation, progress, and level of participation, as well as one high school credit.

So how is the program doing?

“So far we are very pleased with the program,” said Ms. Quish, “and the students say it has helped them dramatically, particularly with their writing.”

Workfare Benefits Both Students and College

“The program greatly benefits both the students and the college,” she said. “It permits the students to work without having to travel to the site and provides the college with additional employees who can commit a set number of hours each week.”

LaGuardia’s workfare program grew out of an effort by The City University of New York to reverse a dramatic drop in enrollment that began in 1995 when Mayor Rudolph Giuliani instituted work requirements for Home Relief recipients. CUNY records indicate that in the 1995 fall semester, 7,670 students who received Home Relief were registered at CUNY, and by the fall of 1996 only 4,269 students on Home Relief were left on the CUNY campuses. Registrar figures show that LaGuardia enrolls over 2,000 students who are on some kind of public assistance.

To be eligible, adults must be full-time students and have a 2.0 grade point average. HRA places participants who meet all the guidelines on the college’s work-site roster for placement in a work assignment on campus.
LaGuardia Provides Year-Round Academic Program for High Schoolers

In an effort to increase the number of high school students who graduate and go on to college, LaGuardia has teamed up with three Queens high schools to run a year-round academic enrichment program that includes a summer experience at a prestigious residential college.

The four-year initiative between LaGuardia and Aviation, Newtown, and William Cullen Bryant High Schools is one of the federally-funded TRIO programs that targets low-income students who are striving to be the first members of their families to graduate from college. Funding for the $890,000 program comes from the Department of Education.

The academic enrichment program selects participants by identifying students who possess some of the academic skills needed to attend college but face certain obstacles that may prevent them from achieving their academic goals. Some are not certain that college is the path they wish to take, while others know they want to pursue higher education but do not know how to go about it.

“LaGuardia has had such great success with the Program for High Schoolers,” said Ms. Perez. “By exposing them to this type of college experience they realize that a whole new set of options are open to them.”

The college's summer institute component is modeled after the successful LaGuardia/Vassar College Institute, which offers LaGuardia’s honor students a chance to experience the academic and social aspects of a highly competitive residential college.

“LaGuardia has had such great success providing its students with a glimpse of what it is like to attend such a college as Vassar,” said Dr. Kahn, “so we decided that a similar experience can benefit high school students as well.”

LaGuardia Students Start Campus Business

In the spirit of the free enterprise system, a team of LaGuardia students has started up its own small business on campus. With the support of the college's Division of Cooperative Education and the Accounting and Managerial Studies Department, six young entrepreneurs are operating a pushcart that sells health and beauty aids and other miscellaneous items.

While its main purpose is to serve the college community, co-op spokesperson John Wolovich said that the ultimate goal of the business is to provide interested students with an education in the area of entrepreneurship. Although management of the business consists of students and members of the college faculty and staff, students are involved in all aspects of the business.

The experience of developing entrepreneurial skills is not limited to students who seek to be self-employed but can also benefit students who wish to find positions within the corporate sector.

Both the Division of Cooperative Education and the Accounting and Managerial Studies Department recognized a need for entrepreneurial internship experiences. They view the experience as a way to help students develop critical thinking skills, understand the importance of work ethics, learn about teamwork, as well as gather practical business management skills.

Any faculty or staff interested in being involved can call either Mr. Wolovich, Michele Stewart, Francine White at ext. 5204 or Yves Richards at ext. 5609.
College Welcomes Acting Vice President

The Division of Academic Affairs had a “changing of the guard” recently when it welcomed George Sussman as acting vice president for Academic Affairs and Paul Arcario as acting assistant dean for Academic Affairs.

Dr. Sussman will lead the division over the next several months while a search gets underway to fill the vacancy created when Provost George Hamada left the college to assume the presidency of Rockland Community College.

Before coming to LaGuardia, Dr. Sussman served as university assistant dean for Academic and International Programs at the CUNY Central Office. Prior to joining CUNY, he served as executive director of the Association of Colleges and Universities of the State of New York. Additionally, he has served as deputy director of the Legislative Commission on Public Management Systems for the New York State Legislature.

After five years at 80th Street, Dr. Sussman expressed his excitement about returning to the campus environment, working directly with faculty and staff, and “if I’m lucky, maybe even meeting some students.” He is particularly excited about being at LaGuardia, a place that he believes has more than earned the moniker, “a tradition of innovation” and keeps earning it every day.

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Amherst College, Dr. Sussman has taught history both on the graduate and undergraduate levels at SUNY Albany, Vanderbilt University, C.W. Post College, and Tuskegee University. He earned both his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Yale University and is the author of several books and articles.

Humanities Professor Commissioned to Compose Work for Czech Orchestra

Dr. Joyce Solomon-Moorman of the Humanities Department has been awarded a commission to compose a work for symphony orchestra that will be performed by the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra of The Czech Republic.

The professor was one of three composers who received the 1998 Vienna Modern Masters Millennium Commissions. Fifty-three composers from 14 countries submitted entries.

The orchestra piece, which will be up to six minutes long, will be performed by the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra. The original composition will also be recorded and released worldwide as part of the Vienna Modern Masters compact disk in VMM’s Music from Six Continents series of orchestral-choral recordings. Music from Six Continents is devoted exclusively to world-premiere recordings of orchestral and orchestral-choral music by living composers from around the world.

Her talents as a composer have also been recognized by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. For the past seven years she has been a recipient of an ASCAP award for her catalog of original compositions and the recent performances of those works. The annual award is designed to recognize deserving writers of serious music.

In 1990 she was a finalist in the first Detroit Symphony Composers’ Competition. Professor Solomon-Moorman has also been commissioned by the Plymouth Chorus and Orchestra of Minneapolis and by the Cygnus Chamber Ensemble of New York City.

The awardee’s concentration is on chamber composition, but she also composes string and large orchestral pieces.

In her professorial role at the college, Professor Solomon-Moorman has taught piano and introduction to music for the past four years.

A graduate of Vassar College, she moved to New York City in 1976 where she earned a master’s degree in music composition from Sarah Lawrence College and a doctorate of education in music from Teachers College, Columbia University.
LaGuardia Conducts Customer-Service Course for New York City Cabbies

To provide the city's taxicab drivers with the tools to achieve the height of professional service to their passengers, the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission has chosen LaGuardia's Division of Adult and Continuing Education to conduct a comprehensive workshop for every licensed medallion taxicab driver in the city.

The interactive continuing education workshop, which was developed by the TLC, will help the city's 43,000 medallion taxi drivers to better serve their passengers, including those with disabilities.

"The required four-hour course will teach the superior customer service techniques that are critical in providing the level of service New York City taxi passengers have come to expect, but on occasion do not receive," said a TLC spokesperson. "The course builds on the knowledge and experience possessed by each taxicab driver, balancing this against passenger issues and then bridging the gap."

"While passengers complain that cabbies are rude and unprofessional," said Steve Brauch, director of the college's New York City Taxi Driver Institute, "cabbies counter that they are not respected by their passengers. As a result, there is sometimes a cycle of mutual disrespect between passengers and drivers. This course attempts to break that cycle and continue to enhance the professionalism of the taxicab industry."

How the course sets out to correct the problem is by providing drivers with an organized open forum where they can interact with each other, candidly voice their opinions, and exchange ideas.

"Driving is a very lonely occupation and there are few opportunities where drivers can talk to one another," said Mr. Brauch. "Cabbies do not get together at conventions to trade techniques for dealing with traffic, difficult passengers, and the stresses of this demanding job."

In a recent class, some 20 cabbies sat in a circle and discussed what they liked and disliked about the job. As they spoke, Andrew Vollo, the instructor, jotted down their comments on the blackboard. In the plus column was money, independence, adventure; on the negative side was a repeated response: "no respect."

Mr. Vollo presented them with a simple message: "In order to get respect you have to earn it."

"So how do you do that?" he asked. The comments flowed. "Keep your cab clean."

"exchange pleasantries. "Drive with care."

The instructor then suggested some ideas that go beyond the call of duty: identify points of interest to tourists, have the morning papers on hand for the passenger's perusal, help passengers with their luggage, and upon leaving them off watch to make sure they safely enter the building.

"A good part of the class is to get the driver to understand what he is doing out there and to start treating the passenger like a guest," Mr. Vollo said.

The instructor, who was a taxi and limousine driver and taxi dispatcher, stated that another way to improve their passenger relations is by learning how to avoid conflict.

"You have to understand that a person who comes into your cab in an angry mood is not upset with you," said Mr. Vollo. "You have to possess a Teflon-type quality and learn to deal with a negative situation and not to take it personally."

Another important goal of the class is to raise the drivers' sensitivity to passengers with disabilities. To help the students better understand the difficulties that a blind person or wheelchair user may face when traveling by cab, the teachers have the students engaged in a number of role playing exercises. In one scenario a driver is blindfolded and instructed to act as a passenger, while another student, playing the part of the driver, must show how he would act in this situation. A discussion follows with drivers telling how they would deal with the particular experience.

"Through the open discussions the drivers learn from one another, which is the key to this class," said Mr. Brauch. "It is not our goal to tell these drivers that we know more than them and that they are doing something wrong. Our goal is to facilitate the learning and sharing process."

To get a sense of the drivers' feelings on the benefits of the course, an evaluation is filled out by each student at the end of the class. "The responses have been quite favorable," said Mr. Vollo. "The only true complaint has been the $20 fee attached to the course."

One favorable response came from a driver who reported that the first day he drove after taking the class he tried one of the passenger-interaction techniques he learned in the course and as a result he had his most profitable day.

Another evaluation tool, said Mr. Brauch, will be a questionnaire that will be mailed out to drivers who complete the course.

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LaGuardia Receives Three Awards from the Department of Employment

LaGuardia's Family Institute recently received three awards from the New York City Department of Employment for its outstanding employment and training programs for youth and displaced workers.

Among the 53 employment and training service providers recognized by the DOE, the college was the only honoree to receive three awards. Hailed were the institute's summer youth employment program, a microcomputer training program for displaced workers, and a skills training program that prepares unemployed applicants for careers as truck drivers, clerical personnel, and medical records keepers.

"The college won these awards this year because we worked diligently to build partnerships with businesses, educational institutions, community-based organizations and government agencies that employed our youngsters during the summer, established internships for our trainees, and hired those that completed the training," said Sandra Watson, director of the Family Institute for Education, Training and Employment.

"Collaboration among entities is the wave of the future that leads to success."

In honoring the contractors, Commissioner Nora Chang Wang said, "these contractors play a vital role in providing a skilled and qualified work force for New York City's businesses."

Through these contractors, the department provides employment and training services to approximately 64,000 New Yorkers annually, including economically disadvantaged adults and youth, as well as displaced workers.

The college's three programs, which receive an estimated $1 million annually from the DOE, reach over 500 people who fall in all three categories.

Summer Youth Employment

For the past six years, the college's summer youth employment program has been placing close to 400 adolescents and young adults in jobs each summer. During the seven-week job experience, students are placed at some 300 community-based organizations and private corporations in the city, as well as at LaGuardia, where they fill a wide range of clerical, recreational, and support staff positions that pay minimum wage.

Worked into the youngsters' 24-hour work week, is a six-hour day at the college where they receive educational enrichment and career counseling. Students learn how to put together a solid resume and attend basic literacy and computer skills classes.

Microcomputer Systems Training

Another award-winning program, the microcomputer systems training program, is designed for people who have recently lost their jobs and wish to reenter the market, specifically in microcomputer applications positions. Each year the college runs two twenty-week cycles that enroll 52 students in each.

"The people enrolling in this retraining program," said Claudia Baldonedo, the program's associate director, "have worked all their lives, but due to unfortunate situations—downsizing, relocation—have lost their jobs and are now out there without the necessary computer skills."

After completing the computer instruction, the college is responsible for placing 70 percent of the 52 graduates in unsubsidized jobs that pay at least $11 per hour.

"The placement requirements are very stringent," said Ms. Watson, who explained that along with the 70 percent placement stipulation, the applicants must be placed within 90 days after completing the training and must remain on the job for at least 90 days. "But we have been very successful in meeting those conditions."

Since the program began 10 years ago, the college has trained nearly 1,000 displaced workers and placed them in well-paying jobs.

Skills Training and Employment

The third award-winning program is a skills training and employment program that allows low-income city residents to choose one of three courses: truck driving, computer office skills, and medical records.

The 10 students (half are women and veterans) who enroll each year in the three-year-old truck driver training program go through a five-week preparatory session where they study maps, math, and English at the college, followed by a four-week class where they learn how to drive small trucks, and four-week career development and job readiness component.

The computer office skills course trains 25 public assistance recipients in clerical areas. The 19-week program includes classroom instruction in word processing and spread sheets, job readiness and career development workshops, as well as a four-week job internship.

In the 18-week medical records course, students learn the intricacies of coding and billing in the classroom and on the job.

"This is a new area for many of our students, so they do not have the background and experience," said Ms. Baldonedo.

"The internship gives them experience, and, for some, leads to a permanent position."

For each of the three programs, the college must place 65 percent of the participants in positions.

"Over the years we have trained a vast number of long-term unemployed individuals, displaced workers, and displaced homemakers in specific areas and watched them move into gainful employment," said Ms. Watson. "It clearly indicates that training programs can make a difference."
College Names New Associate Dean of Adult & Continuing Education

The college has appointed Dr. Linda Gilberto as the new associate dean of the Division of Adult and Continuing Education. Dr. Gilberto, whose appointment was effective beginning October, comes to the college with a breadth of experience in all aspects of credit and non-credit program development, grant development, and budgeting.

The new continuing education administrator is directly responsible for the physical management of the division’s $10 million budget, as well as the development and supervision of programs.

“I have always been impressed by the reputation of LaGuardia Community College, which stands out in the field of adult and continuing education,” said Dr. Gilberto. “I am very pleased to be a part of it, and hope, in some way, to contribute my background to its future success.”

With her roots in the social work field, Dr. Gilberto began her career in family services before making an easy transition to education. In 1973 she joined Family Service of Westchester, a not-for-profit family services agency, and for the next 15 years held various agency positions. She began as the coordinator of Widows and Widowers, Bereaved Parents Programs, and by the time she left in 1987 she was the assistant executive director.

It was in 1987 that Dr. Gilberto decided to take her programmatic and administrative talents to Westchester Community College where she worked in its Continuing Education Division for ten years.

“I felt that the transition from the social services field to the community college was a natural one,” said Dr. Gilberto, “because the family service agency and community colleges serve many of the same types of people with similar life issues.”

She went on to say: “I enjoyed working in a community agency and was always attracted to the community college because its programs were so relevant. Sometimes in the mental-health profession you do not see the impact of some of your interventions. That is not the case with the community college, which seems to really change people’s lives in a very direct way by giving them the tools to change their economic status, and in turn, the social problems that they are facing.”

Dr. Gilberto holds a bachelor’s degree in sociology from the College of New Rochelle, a master’s in social work from the University of Chicago, and a doctorate in social welfare from the Graduate School and University Center of The City University of New York.

Grant from Citibank Serves Local Seniors

A amenities grant from Citibank has subsidized a range of interesting courses being offered to local Queens residents.

The grant was obtained by the division’s Program Operations and LUCED to provide free classes in mental and physical wellness to our community’s senior citizens. T’ai Chi, for example, was so popular that the class had to be divided into two separate groups.

In the spring, seniors will also enjoy introduction to computers, water aerobics and a workshop on speaking with confidence.

LaGuardia joined 20 other service organizations of Western Queens to provide quality-of-life programs to its younger and older populations with monies from Citibank.

These “older” adults are learning T’ai Chi for free thanks to an amenities grant from Citibank.
LaGuardia and Western Queens Community Hospital Establish Paramedic Program

LaGuardia has formed a partnership with the Western Queens Community Hospital enabling the college to establish a certified paramedic program that has already produced its first graduating class.

During this intensive 11-month program, the students complete over 1,000 hours of instructional and skills training at the college and some 375 hours of required hospital rotations.

The one-year merger has already proved results. The first 25 paramedic trainees graduated this past fall and all passed the New York State Department of Health paramedic exam as well as the New York City exam.

“The students’ exemplary performances during the arduous training sequence and on the exams,” said Robert Rosa, senior administrator for health programs, “is a true indicator that this partnership between the college and the health facility has developed a quality paramedic program that will provide the city with qualified trained professionals.”

LaGuardia is no stranger to paramedic training. For the past nine years, the college has offered a degree program, but was forced to subcontract with area hospital-based programs such as St. Vincent’s, Catholic Medical Center, and Booth Memorial.

“We always had the vision of doing the training ourselves,” said Mr. Rosa. “We knew we had the expertise to do the classroom instruction and skills component, but we lacked the hospital connection to do the hospital rotations.”

To fill that important gap, the college began to shop around for a hospital that was interested in establishing itself as an educational and training center. The search led to Dr. Robert Aquino, chairperson of the hospital’s ambulatory medical services, who expressed interest in being the college’s main clinical site. The doctor agreed that the hospital will give the college full access to such facilities as its emergency room, surgical suite, intensive care unit, coronary care unit, and obstetrics, and allow its medical staff to play a key teaching role.

With the establishment of the alliance, the first paramedic class, made up of emergency medical technicians and volunteer ambulance drivers with at least six months of 911 experience, began the demanding 11-month training program in October of 1996.

Strictly following the New York State Department of Health requirements, students must go through over 1,000 hours of classroom instruction at the college and over 375 hours of hospital rotations. To gain exposure to all the clinical situations they will face as paramedics, each student is required to complete between 40 to 45 eight-hour hospital shifts that concentrate on a particular medical area. On each rotation, the student is involved in one-on-one instruction with a staff physician.

“It was an extremely grueling program,” said Melissa Figueroa, the class valedictorian who is also working toward her associate’s degree in EMT/paramedic, “but an invaluable learning experience that will enhance my career opportunities.”

At the paramedic graduation, LaGuardia presented the Western Queens Community Hospital with a plaque for its valuable role in the program. Left to right: George Hamada, former vice president/provost; Elliot Simon, hospital CEO; Dr. Arthur Guarini, medical director; and Robert Rosa, senior administrator for health programs.

News Bullets

The National Council for Continuing Education & Training presented its 1997 Outstanding Educator award to Dean Judith McGaughey.
The College Welcomes its Newest Division: Information Technology

At Opening Sessions 1996, President Bowen shared his vision for the development and implementation of immediate and long-range plans for technology for the college. Specifically, it was the president’s desire to provide the technological infrastructure, tools, access and training to the faculty, staff, and students of LaGuardia that would prepare them for the next century. That vision included bringing E-mail and Internet access to faculty desktops and to all student laboratories, developing the technological infrastructure to enable this increased access, and committing the resources to make this all possible by the year 2000.

To that end, plans to create a new division were announced last March, bringing together the following technology-related areas under one management umbrella—Academic Computing and the Faculty Lab (from the Academic Affairs Division), Administrative Computing (from the Division of Administration), and Information Management and Analysis (from Institutional Advancement). In addition to these existing areas, the new division was charged with the development of a web site for the college, and with implementing a distance learning program.

DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

This past fall, the Division of Information Technology was officially formed with a new acting dean, Dr. Kenneth McCollum. Dean McCollum quickly developed an administrative structure for his new division, currently comprised of the following units:

- **Information Systems**
  
  Director: Richard Krueger
  
  Location: M301
  
  Voice: x6144 / E-mail: rickk

This department’s major focus will be to implement the college’s conversion to SIMS (Student Information Management System), to continue to provide programming support to the college-user community, to continuously monitor and update the college’s web site, and to maintain the Data Warehouse.

- **Institutional Research**
  
  Director: Barbara Astone
  
  Location: E506
  
  Voice: x6130 / E-mail: barbara

Institutional Research provides information resources in the form of data analyses and reports to the college community for planning and assessment purposes, and to the University and other governing agencies to satisfy reporting requirements. The office produces an annual statistical report, “The LaGuardia Community College Institutional Profile.”

- **Instructional Services**
  
  Director: R. Theresa Litvay-Sardou
  
  Location: E517
  
  Voice: x6123 / E-mail: terry

This department will provide expanded technological services to faculty and students, including training, Internet access and maintaining student E-mail accounts, in addition to managing the technical aspects of 16 computer labs.

- **Network Administration and End-User Support**

  A newly centralized department, this area brings together professionals who serve to design, implement, and monitor the college’s Enterprise Network System infrastructure, to provide secure networks, and to ensure the availability of trained technicians to service the college’s user community. A search will soon be conducted to fill the director’s position.

  Ted Dec (ext. 6124) and Robert Monegro (ext. 6126) serve as the Network Manager and End-User Support Manager, respectively.

- **Distance Learning**

  Building on the work in his area by the college’s former provost, Dr. Hamada, the division will assume responsibility for creating the technology to provide for distance learning programs. A search will also be conducted to identify a qualified professional to spearhead this effort.

- **Divisional Affairs**
  
  Director: Yvette Urquhart
  
  Location: E517
  
  Voice: x6129 / E-mail: yvetteu

This area serves to provide administrative support to the divisional dean and its directors in the areas of planning; public relations; the development of divisional and department policies, procedures and processes; personnel and budget.

FUTURE PLANS

Dean McCollum spent much of the Fall semester meeting with deans, directors, chairpersons, and their faculty to hear department needs and to share his plans. Working together as a team, the dean and his directors are currently implementing the following phases of its strategic plan:

- To provide the infrastructure to support increased access and Internet connectivity to the first three floors of the E Building.
- To acquire 400 computers for full-time classroom faculty and student laboratories through purchase and/or lease/purchase agreements.
- To purchase additional servers to support faculty and student E-mail accounts and expanded access to the Internet.
LaGuardia Graduate Receives Prestigious Award

LaGuardia graduate who has distinguished himself as both an honor student and accomplished musician was the recipient of the prestigious LaGuardia Memorial Associate Award.

Anh-Tai Tran, a native of Vietnam whose parents moved the family to the United States in 1982 in hopes of seeking treatment for his visual impairment, received the award at the college’s commencement exercises in September. The $500 scholarship, which goes to a student with high academic standing and a record of community service, is the highest award given to a graduate at commencement.

“As a liberal arts major, Mr. Tran was a very hard working and earnest student who is very deserving of this scholastic award,” said Matthew Joffe, director of the Office for Students with Disabilities and Learning Project. “Throughout his stay at LaGuardia he has taken his academics and music very seriously.”

The 29-year-old Long Island City resident, who graduated with a 3.3 grade point average, is attending Hunter College where he is pursuing a music degree.

Talented in both the classical guitar and piano, Mr. Tran explained that it was his visual impairment that helped him discover his gift and love for music.

At the age of three, Mr. Tran was diagnosed with tunnel vision, an impairment that completely damaged his side vision but allowed him to see objects at a distance. With this vision loss, he would have to attend special education classes, but when he was eight and ready to begin his formal education, his hopes were dashed when the communists took over South Vietnam’s capital and shut down the city’s special education programs.

Without any options, he briefly attended a regular class but the teacher did not know how to deal with a child with special needs, and Mr. Tran quickly fell behind the other children and was forced to leave school.

While his two siblings went to school, Mr. Tran spent his days at home with little to do until he found a guitar in the house and quickly discovered that he could listen to a melody and play it on the instrument.

“I discovered that I had a gift for copying melodies on exact pitch,” he said.

The young musician continued training his ear and teaching himself songs until the age of 11 when his mother realized that her son was serious about music and hired a music tutor.

He said he decided to study classical guitar at a young age because, “I heard it was difficult and challenging and required patience. I figured I had a lot of time, so I could put the time into practicing.”

When Mr. Tran was 14 years old, the parents moved the family to the United States with hopes of finding a doctor who could correct his vision. They settled in the Bronx and took their son to a number of ophthalmologists, but all reported that surgery or medication could not reverse the muscle damage.

“My parents were disappointed the most,” said Mr. Tran. “I have no problem dealing with my vision, and I go on with my life. I associate with people who have worse conditions than mine.”

Mr. Tran was placed in a special education program in the Bronx where he learned how to speak and read English. His parents also enrolled him at the Lighthouse Music School for the visually impaired, a division of the Lighthouse for the Blind, where he continued his formal training in the classical guitar.

Unable to read guitar music, Mr. Tran goes through a long and arduous process of learning a particular composition.

“My technique is too advanced for me to begin to learn how to read music,” he said, “so each composition has to be broken down into sections. I will listen to my instructor play a particular section and then I will repeat it. I memorize one section at a time.”

That is not the case with the piano, which Mr. Tran took up 12 years ago when his music teacher at the Lighthouse felt that his English was strong enough for him to learn to read music.

His mastery in both instruments has been recognized and awarded. In 1992 he won the National Federation of Music Clubs’ Hinda Honigman Scholarship for music students who are visually impaired. The following year he received the Ruth Johnson Piano Award and the Florence Dix Kronsky Award for outstanding student at the Lighthouse, and was recipient of the Vivian Menees Nelson Music Award in 1996.

Mr. Tran has performed many guitar and piano recitals at the Lighthouse. As a guitarist, he was featured in the 1986 gala concert of the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts at Symphony Space and performed at the 1993 National Federation of Music Clubs’ annual convention in Buffalo. Recitals have also been held at the Queens and Manhattan public libraries, and at a Students with Disabilities function at the college. Now at Hunter College, where he has gained the distinction of being the only classical guitarist, Mr. Tran is taking his music to the next level. “There is an advantage being the college’s only classical guitarist,” he said with a smile. “I will get more attention.”

Plotting out a future that is filled with music, Mr. Tran explained that he would like to teach music and perform publicly.

“I am well prepared for any challenges that come my way,” he said with confidence.

High Schools

High Schools Are Lauded

The Robert F. Wagner Jr. Institute for Arts and Technology and Middle College were recent recipients of two different awards.

Arts and Technology received a Bell Atlantic Foundation Excellence in Education Award for its work in developing educational programs that use computers and telecommunications technology to help improve and enrich the learning environment.

At the awards ceremony, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley joined Bell Atlantic officials and other educators for the announcement of $1.5 million in Excellence in Education Awards to 64 colleges, universities, public and private schools, and community organizations engaged in educational technology initiatives in New York and New England.

Middle College received a Business Week Award for its achievements in helping to prepare students for college and careers.

The high school’s innovative academic program, which includes a cooperative education component, received an honorable mention for “helping to prepare today’s students for tomorrow’s workplace.”
LaGuardia Establishes Center to Combat AIDS

Since the division established the Health Education Learning Project and Services Program one year ago, over 500 students have taken advantage of its AIDS counseling and free screenings for tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases.

HELPs has also conducted an effective outreach program for college and high school students. Within the year, trained peer educators have conducted nine classroom presentations to college and high school students, and distributed over 15,000 HELPs brochures and 8,000 condoms.

"Combating the spread of AIDS, as well as STDs, comprises an element of the educational and public health mandate," said Vincent Banrey, associate director of Student Services Cluster. "Unhealthy individuals in our society ultimately will affect us all. We can, however, make a difference; with the tools and the know-how, the HELPs program takes a first step in this direction."

Mr. Banrey pointed out that the effectiveness of college-based programs in combating the spread of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases has been supported in a number of studies and reports. One article in the Journal of College Student Development explains that although HIV testing is available in the community, students may be more inclined to seek it when it is provided on campus.

Another vital component of the program is the training of peer health educators. Since the inception of the program, 61 students have completed the peer health educator training program.

Students participating in the program fall into one of three categories: volunteers, work-study, and interns. Work-study students and volunteers assist with outreach, presentations, and training sessions. Interns perform those duties along with off-campus work with various community-based organizations, such as the AIDS Center of Queens County, Hispanic AIDS Forum, Momentum AIDS Project, and the Corona HIV/AIDS and STDs health clinics. At the end of the internship, students receive a grade on the quality of their work assignments.

"Our students have played an active role in spreading the word to their peers on preventing AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases," said Renee Butler, director of the Early Childhood Learning Center Program and Student Services Cluster.

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Milestones

Dr. George Hamada, left, at one of the more than 25 Opening Sessions he attended throughout his long tenure at the college

Moving On

George Hamada, former provost/vice president of Academic Affairs, recently left our campus to become the newest president of Rockland Community College.

Dr. Hamada, who has been at the college since its founding days, will be greatly missed.

LaGuardia congratulates Dr. Hamada on his appointment and wishes him all the best in his new position.

Births

Ted Dec of Information Technology, and his wife Beata, on September 12, 1997 of their daughter, Michelle.

Nila Sen-Bhaumik of the President’s Office, and her husband Supratim Bhaumik, on December 9, 1997 of their daughter, Sanoja.

Patricia Rivera of the Mathematics Department, on February 26, 1998 of her daughter Nicolle Andrea.

Retirements

Farewell and best wishes to the following recent retirees:

Grace Benjamin, Student Affairs
Maria Cossio, Mathematics
Paul Keci, Administration
Roy Mcleod, Institutional Advancement
Milton Persily, Information Technology
Rosemary Selafrani, Information Technology
Estelle Schneider, Communication Skills
Mukhtar Surita, Student Affairs
LaGuardians Are Running to Sign Up for 5K Race

On Sunday, May 17, 1998, the streets of Long Island City will be roped off and readied for the annual LaGuardia Community College 5K Road Run and Fun Walk. Runners (and walkers) of all ages, from all over the city, are beginning training in preparation for the big day.

The 5K race—a distance of 3.1 miles—will begin at 9:45 am and is open to all age groups. The race follows a measured course through the streets of Long Island City. Each runner will receive a specially prepared, detailed map of the course at check-in.

Youth runs begin at 9:00 am. There will be three distances for these races: children who are eight years-old and younger are eligible for a 200-yard run; kids aged nine to 13 can run a 1/2-mile race; and teens 13 and over can enter to run one mile.

Medals will be awarded to all finishers. For the serious competitors, however, there will be the added incentive of special awards for the top three men and women overall, as well as the top three men and women in specific categories.

But running and racing are not the only activities of the day. Participants will also receive complimentary pool passes which are good from 10:40 am until 12:15 pm on race day.

In addition, all runners are invited to enjoy a post-race buffet before the awards ceremony. (Tickets for non-runners will be available for $3.00 each.) A special runners-only raffle will also be held, and specially designed commemorative 5K Road Run and Fun Walk T-shirts will be given to all pre-registrants (post-registrants only while supplies last).

The pre-registration fee is $15 for entry forms received prior to May 11. Post-registration entries received on or after May 11 will cost $18. LaGuardia students with valid ID pay $10, and $8 is the fee for all youth runs. Post-registration for the 5K will close promptly at 9:15 am on Sunday, May 17, race day.

Registration forms and further information can be obtained from Bob Rosa (ext. 5396) in room C-236. Volunteers interested in working on the day of the race can contact Bob Rosa or Lenore Beaky (ext. 5661).

Get Set to Run

LaGuardians interested in getting in shape for running or walking the 5K Road Run might want to call the Recreation Office at ext. 5044.

The recreation staff is knowledgeable and willing to help set up personal health and fitness regimens. In addition to providing a variety of instructional classes, the department offers equipment and resources for individual workouts, cross- and weight-training, and general exercise. Open swim hours are also available.
Alumni Association Dinner/Dance Cruise Sets Sail May 7th

A moonlit Dinner/Dance Cruise aboard The Spirit of New York is set to sail Thursday, May 7, 1998, from 7:00 pm to 10:30 pm. The event is being sponsored by the LaGuardia Alumni Association, which invites the college community—faculty, staff, students, alumni, family and friends—to join the festivities and sail away from it all.

The ship offers a very beautiful setting, surrounded by wide-open views of historic New York Harbor. Guests will enjoy fine dining and spirits and dance the night away to the wonderful sounds of The Spirit Cruise Band—who will perform music favorites from today's top ten to yesterday's golden oldies.

Ticket prices are $55 each (or $45 each when you buy two or more tickets!)

To be eligible for the discount, multiple tickets must be purchased at the same time. Interested singles may contact the Alumni Association office at ext. 5058. We will try to match you with another single or group so you can take advantage of the discount.

Please make money order or check payable to: LaGCC Alumni Association. Visa and MasterCard also accepted. (Add an additional $4.00 handling charge per order for credit card payments.)

Tickets are available for immediate sale in room E-511.

PREP Program

(Continued from page 4)

she said of the program that she attended six-years ago. "Before I knew it, my bids were starting to come in." Since last September, she received four new six-year contracts from the New York City Department of Transportation.

"We take pride in teaching people the process they must go through to successfully compete for MTA contracts," said Ken Neal, MTAs director of Affirmative Action.

"Through this collaborative effort we are reaching hundreds of small minority businesses that normally would never venture into the world of government contracts. We are arming them with the knowledge they need to enter that arena and many are seeing the fruits of their efforts."

Students also learn the nuts-and-bolts of running a successful business. Providing them with the necessary managerial skills is a Coopers & Lybrand team that covers a number of business topics that include business planning, accounting and financial management, marketing, and proposal preparation.

"PREP is our way of helping people learn more about how to run their own businesses," said Joel Gazes, a managing partner at Coopers & Lybrand. "In today's trend toward downsizing, more and more people are becoming entrepreneurs and are establishing their own businesses. PREP is helpful in preparing these people for the real world."

Another lesson PREP teaches is the importance of networking. "The course explains to them that they must get in touch with people," said Mr. Hunt. "They learn how important it is to establish relationships with their bank and to make contacts with individuals who may require their services or who can direct them to companies that may."

Nelson Rivas, president of Power Rail in Mineola and the third honoree, said that he was well entrenched in the industry but he was looking for ways to establish networks and make connections with the "big guys." Today he is supplying vital equipment for such commuter railroads as New Jersey Transit and Santa Clara in California.

"It is all a matter of networking, sending your materials and brochures," said Ms. Bennett, "and knocking on doors, getting kicked out and going back." One of the companies she is now courting is Mercedes Benz, which is coming to Rockland County. "They told me my letter and brochure was the first one to arrive and they are on the recruiter's desk," she said. "When they are ready to hire they will know how I can serve them."

In reflecting upon the life preserver PREP threw to her company, Ms. Bennett said: "I think every minority firm should go through PREP."

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In an attempt to judge the readership of the publication, we are asking you to return this form if you would like the college to continue producing this newsletter.

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