College Wins $200,000 Grant for 'First Ever' Center for At-Risk High School Students

LaGuardia Community College has received a $200,000 grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to establish the nation’s first center to help high schools and colleges serve high-risk students.

The Center for At-Risk Students will create a national network to gather and exchange information on successful educational programs, offer training and support services to educators who are conducting programs, and provide experienced consultants to assist urban schools confronted with a high dropout rate. In addition, specialists in the field will monitor and evaluate schools’ existing programs.

"With the Trusts’ two-year grant," said Dr. Janet Lieberman, special assistant to the president for educational collaboratives and director of the new center, “the college, which has been a leader in developing successful dropout prevention programs, can now implement another strategy that tackles this problem nationally.

Dr. Lieberman will oversee an advisory committee of educators experienced in working with disadvantaged and minority students and with potential dropouts.

One objective is to gather information on programs that have either succeeded or failed in the attempt to educate at-risk students.

President's Report:
LaGuardia Moves Forward on Many Fronts, Despite Budget Difficulties

Our March 1st Professional Staff Meeting was a very special one.

We honored more than 40 faculty and staff members who marked their 10th or 15th year of service. I was particularly moved by the recollections we heard from some of the 15-year honorees. Richard Lieberman, Peter Brown, Joan Edwards, Barbara Galla, Naomi Greenberg and Grace Martinez displayed the kind of commitment to our community and student body that has become characteristic of our professional family.

At the meeting, I was pleased to report that over the past four years, our enrollment has increased by 25.1%, and 7.5% over last year. LaGuardia continues to be very strong in a highly competitive environment.

As we continue to press for adequate funding for next year, I am finding that LaGuardia’s solid record of accomplishment and responsiveness to student and community needs serves us well. My meetings with the
"The fifteen-year record of Middle College gives us knowledge of partnerships, interdisciplinary courses, guidance programs and a wealth of interventions suitable for other schools," she said.

Also available to schools will be consultants who will offer on-site assistance to design solutions to program problems. The center plans to recruit ten nationally known consultants who have broad experience.

The center also plans to disseminate information on successful innovations through biannual conferences, a quarterly newsletter, and published scholarly articles.

Dr. Lieberman noted that after the initial funding period ends, the center will support itself through membership or service fees.

The Pew Charitable Trusts award grants in the areas of conservation and the environment, culture, education, health and human services, public policy and religion.

One-Time College Dropout Wins CUNY Belle Zeller Scholarship

For Dolores Colon-Montalvo the decision to return to college after a failed attempt some 19 years ago was difficult for the 37-year-old single mother but one that was prompted by two important factors.

"First, I saw my son and daughter advancing in their studies and I began to feel a little bit envious," said Ms. Colon-Montalvo. "Also I wanted to be the right kind of role model for them."

With this motivation, she enrolled in one course at LaGuardia. If she had any problems, her plan was to drop out from college once again.

Ms. Dolores Colon-Montalvo

The second time around, however, Ms. Colon-Montalvo not only took on all the academic challenges but went on to distinguish herself as an honors student whose exemplary record helped her win a CUNY Belle Zeller Scholarship. She was one of 11 collegians to receive this prestigious award for outstanding scholastic achievement and community service this year. More than 200 CUNY students applied for the scholarship, which carries a $1,000 stipend annually for a student's entire undergraduate career at CUNY.

Since entering LaGuardia in 1986, the Belle Zeller scholar has maintained a 3.88 index and has been actively involved in volunteer service at the college and in her Woodside community.

Although Ms. Colon-Montalvo's present college experience has been successful, the honors student remembers her first college encounter, which was far from rewarding. She enrolled in Hunter College's art program in 1970 under CUNY's One Hundred Scholars, a program which guaranteed the top 100 students from each of the city's high schools admission to a CUNY unit.

At Hunter, however, she soon discovered that, although she managed to get passing grades in her art classes, she could not compete academically in her math, English and science courses. So after accumulating only 50 credits in four years she decided to leave.

"As I look back now I say to myself that I should have tried to knock on more doors to get help," she said, "but at that time the college's size and the difficult classes simply overwhelmed me."

Soon after leaving Hunter, Ms. Colon-Montalvo married, and aside from one-year as a paraprofessional for the Board of Education, she devoted the next 12 years to raising her children Barbara, 14 and Alejandro, 11.

Her second college try finally came in 1986. When Ms. Colon-Montalvo enrolled in an English class at the college and received an A, she decided to become a matriculated liberal arts major.

Along with her involvement in her studies and her children, Ms. Colon-Montalvo volunteers her time to both the college and her community.

At the college, the honors student works as a tutor in the writing center. Outside of the college, Ms. Colon-Montalvo volunteers her time to the Corpus Christie Parish in Woodside. She is also a member of the Woodside House's tenants patrol and association.

When she graduates this June, the Belle Zeller Scholarship winner said that she will take her newly discovered passion for literature and transfer to City College's English program. After receiving a baccalaureate her sights are set for a PhD and finally a teaching position at a community college.

"Maybe I'll come back and teach at LaGuardia," Ms. Colon-Montalvo said with a smile, "where I can help people like myself find themselves."
Middle College Course Gives American History New Focus

The college and Middle College High School have developed a new team-taught American studies course for the high school that uses classroom instruction and creative writing assignments to explore the country's history through the lives of ordinary American citizens and their role in shaping important events.

"By telling the stories of both the great figures and common men and women," said Professor Roberta Matthews, one of the project developers, "students learn that ordinary people also have had a place in history. As these stories unfold, they discover that they too are actors and they can take control of this lives."

The course, developed by Professor Matthews and Middle College social studies teachers—Eleanor Morley, Bob Kluberdanz and Sam Allen—is based on CUNY's American Social History Project, a multimedia curriculum which uses pamphlets and videos. It is hoped that the course can become a model for use at other alternative high schools.

The course was first offered last fall with Professor Matthews teaching the writing component and Ms. Morley teaching history. Instruction is based on a "pyramid effect"—beginning with a broad overview, narrowing the focus to a social history lesson and ending with a writing assignment that explores the connection between major events and their impact on the lives of ordinary people.

Ms. Morley's history class introduces topics with the aid of pamphlets and a textbook. When the general historical overview is completed, Professor Matthews begins the social history segment with a video that tells a story of individuals who lived through that period and the small but significant contributions they made to the country's past. For example, the social history lesson connected the industrialization of New England and Lucy Hill, a young woman who responded to that development by leaving her family's farm to work in a factory.

Students use the details from the video, along with the information they received in the history class and from pamphlets, to complete a writing assignment. For instance, Professor Matthews asked students to put themselves in Ms. Hill's situation and to write a letter to family members discussing whether they should remain on the farm or work in the mills.

The writing assignments, said Ms. Morley, provide students with the chance to develop their own ideas. "Instead of just repeating information," she explained, "they are invited to use their creativity to develop their own points of view."

After running one class in the Fall and Winter quarters, the developers are now refining the materials and developing a resource manual that the college plans to offer to other alternative high schools.

Integrated Resources Donates $4000 of Computers For New Lab

The college recently received over $4,000 worth of high tech computer equipment from a private corporation, Integrated Resources.

The equipment includes 49 full-screen terminals, four controllers, and five teletype-style printers. The equipment, to be used by students, will be installed this fall in one of the new computer labs in the former Exacto building.

"The equipment," said Barbara Mulhill, a lab technician in the Computer Information Systems Department, "is a step up from what the students are presently working on."
Edward Coppola, a college lab technician in the photography program, was a commissioned photographer on a recent Egyptian archaeological excavation that discovered an extremely well-preserved sarcophagus dating back to the Middle Kingdom period, circa 2065-1785 B.C.

Except for a small chip in the corner of the lid, the ancient coffin, cut from a single piece of granite, was perfectly intact.

“This is a very important find because of its condition and the beautifully executed craftsmanship,” said Mr. Coppola, whose work will appear in an archaeological publication.

The sarcophagus was built for Mentuhotep, a vizier. After Pharaoh, the vizier was the most powerful person in the state of ancient Egypt.

The discovery was made at a previously unknown tomb located near El Lisht, a village 40 miles southwest of Cairo. The site, which also includes two badly decomposed pyramids, several cemeteries and villages, has not been extensively explored since the 1920s. The site, however, stirred the interest of Dr. Dieter Arnold, an archaeologist from the Metropolitan Museum of Art who is a specialist on ancient Egyptian building techniques and the Middle Kingdom.

Leading to the discovery of the tomb and its prized sarcophagus was the unearthing of several clues: stone fragments, a headless statue with an inscription referring to Mentuhotep and part of what Dr. Arnold believed was a mud-brick palace wall. With these indicators and his knowledge of ancient Egyptian village planning, Dr. Arnold instructed his team to begin digging. Two weeks later they reached a retaining stone, which when removed, revealed a sharply angled, cut-limestone ramp.

Dragging his camera equipment, Mr. Coppola followed Dr. Arnold down the dark canal, and after a 50-foot descent, came upon the carved chamber and the sarcophagus buried in sand up to its lid.

Mr. Coppola said that the chamber floor was also filled with fragments of a second sarcophagus, which had been placed over the actual coffin in an attempt to thwart robbers.

“Constructing such dupes was just one method the Egyptians used to trick thieves,” he said. “Sometimes they built entire false chambers.”

For the next two weeks, Mr. Coppola visited the chamber each day and made hundreds of photographs of the sarcophagus. Photographing its inner walls became a particularly arduous task involving members of the team who used ropes to lift its two-ton lid.

The eventual fate of the sarcophagus will be decided by the Egyptian government.

“They may decide to just leave it there,” he said, “because, although it is a beautiful artifact, there are many similar examples of works from that period in the world’s museums.” Another possibility would be to place it on public view at the site of the tomb, and still another would be to house it in the Cairo Museum.

Still excited by the experience, Mr. Coppola said he hopes to accompany Dr. Arnold on his next project: a search for an adjoining chamber and the exploration of the two nearby pyramids. He explained that ground water has prevented the full excavation of these tombs.

“Dr. Arnold would like to drain the water and begin excavations,” he said. “It is exciting to think what might still be down there.”
Unique Sign Language Program Uses Innovation to Upgrade Interpreter Skills

The college has developed a first-of-its-kind program to upgrade the skills of sign language interpreters using an innovative training approach.

The pilot program, which admitted its first students last fall, addresses the needs of working professional interpreters through an intensive 15-hour weekend workshop which differs substantially from what has been available before.

"In the past," said Bonnie Singer, coordinator of interpreter services, "the interpreter was trained to simply take English and represent it literally, without consideration for the syntax and lexicon that make up American Sign Language. As a result, the listener may not get a clear message all of the time."

To train interpreters to be more effective, the program engages them in exercises that strengthen memory and retention, and develops such skills as dual tasking—the ability to listen and process while signing.

Coupled with the workshop is a four-week lab component where students continue to work on the information presented at the intensive, as well as improve their signing skills through the use of state-of-the-art video equipment.

For example, students are taped during a signing exercise and immediately view and critique their style. The equipment was funded through a $15,000 grant from the Queens Borough President's Office.

In addition, the college has developed a flexible lab sequence for interpreters who are unable to attend the workshop/lab program.

The program also provides interpreters an important support system. "Many interpreters work independently and do not have the opportunity to interact with other professionals," she said. "The program provides interpreters with an opportunity to discuss problems, receive feedback, and make contacts."

The program is responding to increased demand by interpreters for help in improving skills acquired during their academic training, which often was not comprehensive.

"Traditionally, education for interpreters," said Ms. Singer, "has been college-level programs that teach sign language skills for from nine-months to two years, which is not enough time. As a result, they need ways to increase their skills."

Since the fall, 40 interpreters have enrolled in either the workshop/lab program or the on-going lab option.

"If the response continues to be favorable," said Ms. Singer, "the college will establish it as a model."

Safety Circle Program Expanded to Include Escort Service to Trains and Parking

The division of Administration, in an effort to provide increased security, has instituted an expanded security guard escort service to the parking lot and the Rawson Street train station.

Under the "Safety Circle" program, security guards are available throughout the day and evening to organize individuals walking to the train station or parking lot into groups so they do not travel alone, or to personally escort individuals, if a group cannot be organized.

According to Alfred Longobardi, director of Support Services, the program was instituted as a response to an increase in crime in the area. Mr. Longobardi indicated that since the winter quarter there have been a number of muggings at the Rawson Street Station, as well as purse snatchings, car thefts and break-ins.

"The college hopes that the escort program will alleviate the concerns that some college members have expressed about walking alone to their car or the station," he said.

Anyone who wishes to use the service during the day or evening should go to the "Safety Circle" areas located at the security desks in the main building's lobby or Center 3's third and seventh floors. Each area is clearly identified by a green "Safety Circle" poster.

Mr. Longobardi explained that if only one person is waiting to be escorted, security officers will offer to accompany that individual to his or her car or the train station. If several people are waiting at the same time to be escorted to the same destination, the security guard will instruct them to walk together.

In another step the college sponsored a crime symposium in March with officers from the Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit.

The city transit and police departments have also increased security measures in the area. The New York Transit Authority has assigned a uniform police officer to patrol the Rawson Street Station, and when additional manpower is available, an undercover officer is assigned to the station. In addition, local Precinct 108 has ordered its anti-crime team, made up of police officers who work out of uniform, to patrol the area in their own cars.

"We hope that as more and more people become aware of the program that they will take advantage of this service," Mr. Longobardi said.
College for Children Expands Offerings and Age Groups

In the spring of 1982 some 100 young people participated in LaGuardia's newest continuing education program: The College for Children. Seven years later, over 400 children each quarter attend the Saturday program which offers increasing number of enrichment and recreational classes.

"We are very pleased with the growth of College for Children and its success in fulfilling a need in the community," said Program Director Laura MacDermeid.

Over the past seven years, as the enrollment has increased, so too have the class offerings. Added to the original courses developed for six- through 12-year-olds have been art and reading classes designed for preschoolers and a full range of enrichment courses for adolescents. Each quarter now, young people ranging in age from three to 16 now have 30 classes to choose from.

On a typical Saturday morning, pre-schoolers are engaged in a creative arts and crafts lesson, 10-, 11- and 12-year-olds are busily working on Apple Ile computers, first and second graders are brushing up on their reading skills, and high school students are preparing for the verbal and math sections of the SATs.

In developing the curriculum, Ms. McDermeid explained that she and her core of 20 instructors, many of whom are public school teachers, seek to offer a variety of content areas to various age groups.

Ms. McDermeid noted, however, that the most popular class is swimming, held at the Bulova School in Woodside, where parents join their children in the pool. Other popular offerings include martial arts classes and the reading and math tutorials.

"Over one-third of the children attend the academic enrichment classes," Ms. McDermeid said.

In addition to regular classes, College for Children also conducts three grant-funded programs. One, operated in conjunction with the college's Program for Deaf Adults, is designed for deaf parents and their hearing children. The workshop exposes parents to a variety of parenting techniques. In a separate class, their children, who range in age from 3 to 6, are engaged in art, music and play activities that enhance language development. The pilot program is supported by a Kenworthy Swift Foundation grant.

In another program, the college provides academic instruction to hotel children funded by the Kenworthy Swift Foundation. Two afternoons a week 15 youngsters are tutored in math and reading by a teacher at I.S. 238 in Jamaica.

A third grant-funded program provides free tuition to fifth graders from P.S. 171. Kicked off during the Winter Quarter with 18 children, the program is part of a collaborative effort between the college and the Astoria public school supported by the Laura B. Vogler Foundation and Republic National Bank.

This program is part of a series of enrichment activities designed to encourage elementary school children to remain in school. This spring 25 fifth graders are enrolled in classes, and in the summer 20 youngsters will be attending the program.

One new development is a joint effort by the Division of Adult and Continuing Education and the Division of External Affairs to eventually expand The College for Children to a full summer program.

The program was a response to a needs assessment survey conducted in the Western Queens in 1980.

Photo above: A College for Children preschooler absorbed in an arts and crafts class for 3- to 5-year-olds, one of some 30 courses offered as part of the Saturday program.
New Collaborative at A Local Elementary School Aims to Cut Dropout Rate

The college, in its first collaborative with a local public elementary school, has launched a series of enrichment activities designed to encourage elementary school youngsters to continue their education.

The early grade dropout prevention model, which is now in its second year, is specially designed for fifth graders attending P.S. 171, an Astoria public school that serves predominantly minority and disadvantaged youngsters.

"The college hopes to encourage them to stay in school and eventually to go on to college," said Professor Gail Baker, the program's liaison.

To open the students' eyes to the importance of attaining an education, the college this spring developed an assortment of career education and cultural programs.

In one career education activity some 80 students will visit the college campus for a first-hand look at a college environment and some of the classes offered. Students will sit in on physical therapy, occupational therapy, animal health, nursing, accounting and art classes, while faculty members talk about careers within the field, and the education necessary to pursue those careers.

"We want to show students that beyond the fifth grade there is high school and college, and that they must climb those steps to reach their career goal," said Program Coordinator Gus Hatzidimitriou.

In another career education program, the college will escort the youngsters on a field trip to an IBM facility where computer chips are repaired. According to Dean Dorrie Williams, who is coordinating the visit, the activity will provide students with the opportunity to learn about the important role these chips play in a computer system and the education needed to enter the world of computer technology.

"Throughout the visit, students will be introduced to the many positive benefits and career options in the computer field that will be available to them once they complete their schooling," said Dean Williams.

To broaden cultural understanding, the theater office has developed a series of music activities for the entire fifth grade. The theater is hopeful the program will receive a $7,000 artist-in-residence grant from the New York Foundation for the Arts.

Theater Director Dan Horn indicated that if funding is provided the program could include a workshop where students create stories and poems that are converted into song lyrics, a music demonstration, an arts-and-crafts class where students build simple folk-style instruments, and a student performance where the children sing their compositions.

Also participating is the Division of Adult and Continuing Education, which has received a $2,500 Vogler Foundation grant to open its College for Children program this spring to 25 P.S. 171 students and up to 20 fifth graders during its summer program (see story page six).

The college/elementary school collaboration has also led to the creation of co-op internships for LaGuardia students. Professor Baker and Professor Iris Sutherland of the Early Childhood Education program, are currently making arrangements with P.S. 171 to place several of the college's pre-education program students in the public school next fall.

"It is a educational merger where both schools benefit," said Professor Baker.

Art Selection Committee Grapples with Issues Of Aesthetics and Economics

Will a minimal relief sculpture boldly stand in the grand entrance of the college's new facility or a large mural instead? Will a fountain or reflecting pool be the centerpiece of the exterior landscaped courtyard?

These are some of the questions the college's Art Selection Committee must ponder and resolve. The 16-member committee has identified five specific areas in the college that will receive specially designed pieces of artwork: the main entrance, the exterior landscaped courtyard, the interior atrium, the library entrance, and the theater facade.

"This is the first time in the history of LaGuardia that a committee has been created to acquire art specifically designed for places that do not yet exist," said Committee Chairperson Ana Maria Herandez of the Humanities Department. "In the past, the college would acquire existing works of art, and then the decision of where it would be placed would be made."

"The selected artists," added Professor Peter Brown, committee co-chair, "will work closely with the architect to create works that are in sympathy with the architecture and the goals of the college."

One percent of the new building's construction budget—$342,000—has been earmarked for commissioned artwork.

Other members of the committee are: Jonathan Clymer, Ed Coppola, Marguerita Greco and Gary Vollo of the Humanities Department; Paula Continued on page eight
Continued from page one

legislative leaders have convinced me that we have many influential friends in Albany and at City Hall.

I want to thank you for participating in the recent campaign to write letters urging your State Assemblypersons and Senators to provide full funding to LaGuardia and our sister institutions. More than 3,000 letters were mailed. They will, I am sure, make a difference.

Our College’s Transition and Budgetary Advisory Committee has now heard in-depth presentations on the budgets and operations of all the divisions. This representative group is now informed sufficiently to give me advice on any budget contingencies that may arise in the spring and summer.

We have also had similar budget briefings for the members of the Departmental and Divisional Personnel and Budget Committees. Members met with me in April to learn about how our budget is shaped. They, too, are now in a position to advise their deans and chairpersons on budgetary matters.

The Presidential Search Process is moving along quite well. Final candidates should be visiting us in the middle of May for interviews. The College’s Transition and Budget Committee has discussed ways to ensure campus-wide involvement in the interviewing process. Interviews will be conducted by such groups as academic chairs, senior faculty, administrators, students, senators, Faculty Council members and a constituency committee representing influential college interest groups. Each interviewing group will transmit a report assessing the candidates to the Search Committee and the chancellor.

While the Search Process moves forward, the departments and divisions are completing status reports for the new president. These documents will brief our next chief executive on area objectives, accomplishments and problem. I am sure our new president will appreciate the transition report as he or she begins to establish an agenda for the years ahead. I want to thank all of you for your contributions to the briefing document.

I hope the Spring Quarter is going well for you and look forward to seeing you at our June Professional Staff Meeting. By that time, I am sure I will be able to update you on the outcome of our budget negotiations and on the Presidential Search Process.

LaGuardia Community College/CUNY
31-10 Thomson Avenue
Long Island City, N.Y. 11101

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Nesoff, Helen Perry and Michele Stewart of Cooperative Education; Dan Horn of External Affairs; Lynne Hayden of the Office of the President; Hilda Medel of the Mathematics Department; Shirley Miller of the Division of Cooperative Education; Adele Rainey of the Division of Administration; Louise Spain of Media Services, and Laverne Trawick of the Division of Student Services.

The first phase of the selection process began last summer when the college invited artists from across the country to participate in its national art competition.

The committee received 258 applications containing 419 proposals. "That was twice the number the committee expected," said Professor Brown. "We attracted artists from all sections of the country, some with national and even international reputations."

The committee by this month will have narrowed the competition to three or four finalists per site, and the last phase of the competition will take place in the early part of June when the 15 to 20 artists will each present to the committee a detailed proposal on the piece that he or she will create for the area. By the end of June the committee will make its final decision.