

## LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### LaGuardia Community College Response to Pathways Initiative

November 15, 2011

#### THE PROCESS USED TO GATHER CAMPUS-WIDE RESPONSE

The CUNY Pathways to Degree Completion initiative

1. <http://www.cuny.edu/academics/initiatives/degreepathways.html>) was “designed to create a curricular structure that will streamline transfers and enhance the quality of general education across the University.” Three representatives from LaGuardia were named to the Pathways Steering and Working Committees. They are:

Elizabeth Beck, Student, Steering Committee member

Valerie Taylor-Haslip, Associate Professor, Nursing, Working Committee member

Scott White, Associate Professor, Library, Working Committee member

After an initial joint Steering and Working Committee meeting, which was held on August 26, 2011, the three LaGuardia members of the Pathways Task Force met to create a strategic plan to keep the campus informed about Pathways’ development. Because of the short time frame, it was agreed they would share developments as they unfolded campus wide. LaGuardia was able to engage in a very open dialogue about the Pathway’s project, including creating conversation opportunities at various campus functions, meeting with leadership groups and using multiple web communication tools.

The working committee created a blog (<http://pathwaysblog.wordpress.com/>) to keep the campus informed, answered questions and communicated with the campus community viae-mail, and actively worked to involve students by having the head of student government engaged in campus conversations and by providing students access to all online dialogues. The conversation was deepened through the use of an innovative campus-wide on-line discussion. This discussion was moderated and facilitated in the form of a Jam, a process the campus learned of from Knowledge in the Public Interest. A Jam provides an opportunity for in-depth dialogue whose digitized results provides the basis for a comprehensive analysis. LaGuardia’s Jam, entitled the “Pathways to Degree Completion Jam”, was open to all faculty, staff and students and was held from November 7, noon to November 8, midnight. A group of campus leaders, in addition to the members of the working group, met to analyze the Jam transcript.

LaGuardia Pathways Task Force members met with the following groups:

Academic Chairs \* Scott White 9/20/11, 11/3/11.

Senate--Elizabeth Beck/Valerie Taylor-Haslip/Scott White \* 9/21/11.

Faculty Council \* Valerie Taylor-Haslip/Scott White - 10/5/11.

Instructional Staff Meeting (an open meeting for all faculty) – Valerie Taylor-Haslip/Scott White \* 10/12/11.

Curriculum Committee \* Valerie Taylor-Haslip \* 10/13/11.

President's Cabinet (a quarterly meeting of 65 campus leaders) \* Scott White \* 10/21/11.

LaGuardia Pathways Ad Hoc Response committee \* Elizabeth Beck/Valerie Taylor-Haslip/Scott White - 11/10/11.

Student Government Association \* Elizabeth Beck.

Web Radio Interview "How it Works" hosted by Hugo Fernandez \* Valerie Taylor-Haslip/Scott White. 11/11/11

The Chair of Faculty Council, Janet Michello and Chair of the College Senate Robert Kahn, suggested an ad hoc committee be formed to finalize the abovementioned suggestions, and developed the following timeline.

Draft of Pathways "Common Core" distributed November 1.

Feedback accepted from campus at large. November 1-11.

Online Jam. November 7-8.

Professors Taylor-Haslip and Scott White Co-Chair ad-hoc Committee on the Common Core to analyze and synthesize responses. November 9-11.

Response document released November 14. Document to be reviewed by President Mellow and designees.

Edited document released to campus and forwarded to Pathways. November 15.

Further responses forwarded to Pathways through review period.

Final draft of Pathways "Common Core" released December 1, 2011.

Members of the Pathways Ad Hoc Response committee:

Valerie Taylor-Haslip, Associate Professor, Nursing, Co-Chair

Scott White, Associate Professor, Library, Co-Chair

Representing Student Body

Missary Arredondo, Secretary, Student Government Association

Elizabeth Beck, Student, Member of Pathways Steering Committee

Donavan Borrington, President, Student Government Association

Representing the College Senate

Loretta Capuano, HEO, Director, Student Information Services, Student Affairs

Marcia Glick, Professor, Communication Skills

Robert Kahn, HEO, Director, Grants Development; Chair, College Senate

Representing Faculty Council

Jean Buckley-Lockhart, Lecturer, Counseling

Holly A. Porter-Morgan, Assistant Professor, Natural and Applied Sciences

Representing Curriculum Committee

Terry Cole, Professor, English

John Shean, Professor, Social Science

#### LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAMPUS-WIDE RESPONSE

The general sentiment about the Pathways initiative is that it is a noble cause. Trying to discover a more seamless, less cumbersome transfer system is in our students' best interests. We commend the Pathways to Degree Task Force for the draft learning outcomes. We agree that students should be able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills proposed, and we find the learning outcomes appropriate. LaGuardia's own focus on learning outcomes has resulted in extensive and important curricular standards and has allowed us to use authentic student work (through our e-Portfolio process) in assessing student achievement of these outcomes. Learning outcomes provide the flexibility for achieving student learning in multiple yet rigorous ways, and we strongly support the use of learning outcomes as the process of creating seamless transfer continues.

We are also heartened by the University's stance of including community college professors as full partners in the process of creating the common core of general education. The faculty at LaGuardia are active scholars, and their academic excellence and experiences provide an important voice in the dialogue concerning what students should learn.

Previously, trying to negotiate degree articulation between LaGuardia and four-year colleges was challenging, and rarely structured as a negotiation between equally qualified peers. The common core will greatly facilitate this process.

We understand that a discussion of what a student should learn in college goes to the heart of our purpose as a university, and therefore deeply held perspectives of the faculty will vary. We further understand that there is a tension in American higher education between the ideal and the practical. Less than 50% of all students attending any CUNY campus will complete all of their studies at one

campus, a trend that is also true nationally. Holding a single standard at a particular campus, therefore, realistically achievable by only a small subset of all students. And it is here that the practical and the ideal sometimes collide. The focus on creating a more flexible system, which has clear overall goals and provides students with different campus-based processes to achieve these goals, serves both the University and our students well.

Overall, concerns about the Pathways might be grouped into process issues, flexibility, and implications for degree programs. Furthermore, there is a deep concern that the process does not contain sufficient incentives for students to complete an associate's degree, as Pathways might have the unintended consequence of encouraging early transfer. We believe that a degree matters, and encourage the University to take additional steps to make completion of the associate's degree as attractive as possible through a variety of mechanisms.

We would like to outline the issues that were raised on campus as we discussed the Pathways initiative. One of the earliest criticisms was that the faculty who developed the Pathways project were not the formally elected members of the College Senates. (Parenthetically, this process would have been complex at LaGuardia, since the formally elected College Senate also has student and staff members. As noted above, two of the three representatives from the College Senate, LaGuardia's formal college governance structure, were not faculty.) There are some at LaGuardia who maintain that the Pathways project ignores faculty prerogative over the curriculum, although this point is contentious.

There is no doubt that our curricular structure will be affected and that this change will be initiated by a university-wide faculty group that was not elected, but ultimate changes must be voted on by LaGuardia's Curriculum Committee and College Senate. We are in receipt of Vice Chancellor Schaffer's November 7th memo, which details the Pathways process and its legal and administrative standing. This memo provides valuable information, yet some staff and faculty at LaGuardia do not believe the process was sufficiently collegial. Hard work has gone into the creation of curriculum and programs that have been constructed and approved at the departmental curriculum committee, the College Curriculum Committee, the College Senate, the CUNY Board of Trustees and the New York State Education Department, and we acknowledge that many college programs will have to be revised.

Additionally, some would have preferred more time for substantive feedback. As will be demonstrated, the impact Pathways will have on LaGuardia will be significant. It would have been easier to have more time allotted to hear and respond to legitimate concerns about the Pathways proposal. However, we must also acknowledge that the impediments to student transfer have existed for more than thirty years without being addressed, and that the shortened time frame has created led to concrete action for the first time.

A Professor from the Communication Skills Department stated the following in the Pathways Jam:

Streamlined transfer is needed. Other state and city systems are not as fragmented and unfriendly to students as CUNY. A gen-ed core is probably a good idea but this one seems inflexible and likely to reduce the course offerings at the community and to a lesser degree the 4 year colleges drastically. What about new curriculum and programs? It's not clear how CUNY central will deal with them. Didn't

the college just spend the last several years creating new courses and programs to appeal to students? Will this expand or shrink them? Will we now see a Darwinian struggle at the community colleges and the 4 years of what and whose courses get saved? And what about transfer from community college to community college?

Several issues have continually been raised regarding the potential impact Pathways will have on the college. These issues also were discussed as part of the Pathways Jam and during the Ad Hoc LaGuardia Committee meeting. It will be on these issues that we will focus our response.

They include:

1.) The impact the proposed Common Core credit structure will have on LaGuardia programs. As a counselor stated in the Jam:

\*this process will necessitate each department to re-evaluate their requirements not in light of what they believe is the best preparation for their students, but what is needed to meet the core requirements. I believe the required core will be easier to implement but even this will result in major changes. I reviewed 18 majors at LaGuardia that offer either an AA or an AS and 16 of these would have to adjust their requirements to meet the pathway requirements. If we were able to reduce the English requirement to 6 credits that would reduce the number of majors that would have to change to 13, which is still a very large number.

Another Jam response from a HEO in the College Senate:

I am mystified by the apportionment of 7 credits to English Composition and 4 credits to Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning within the Common Core. I did a quick look at the requirements at all the CUNY colleges. I only found 3 colleges that devote 7 credits to English Comp (CSI, York, and Kingsborough). A few require only one comp course and then require a certain number of courses be taken during the entire 4 years that carry a W designation. But the majority (11 by my count) are like LaGuardia and require two 3-credit courses. So, why did the Steering Committee go with 7 credits?

As an example of the impact on the college of the change in credit allotments, let's examine Environmental Science, a relatively new AS program. Burl Yearwood, the Chair of the Natural Sciences Department, and Holly A. Porter Morgan, faculty member and Director of the Environmental Science program, provide the following breakdown that compares the current Environmental Science program to what it could look like after Pathways.

Environmental Science

Current Curriculum: AS Degree

Counseling: New Student Seminar (0)

English: 6 credits

Composition 1 ENG 101 (3)

Writing Through Literature ENG 102 (3)

Humanities: 3 credits

Environmental Ethics HUP 108 (3)

Math, Engineering & Computer Science: 7 credits

Elementary Statistics I MAT 120 (3)

Pre-calculus MAT 200 (4)

Social Science: 6 credits

Introduction to Macroeconomics SSE 104 (3)

Environmental Sociology SSN 202 (3)

Natural Sciences: 32 credits

Fundamentals of Biology I SCB 201 (4)

Fundamentals of Biology II SCB 202 (4)

General Microbiology SCB 260 (4)

Fundamentals of Ecology SCB 265 (4)

General Chemistry I SCC 201 (4)

General Chemistry II SCC 202 (4)

Geographic Information Systems SCG 150 (4)

Environmental Science SCG 250 (4)

Cooperative Education: 6 credits

Fundamentals of Professional Advancement CEP 121

Full-Time Internship CEP 201 (3)

(Both Day and Extended Day students are required to take CEP 121.

Extended Day students make take CEP 201 or an unrestricted elective course.)

This fulfills the Urban Study requirement

TOTAL CREDITS: 60

## Proposed Curriculum

After Pathways:

Counseling:

New Student Seminar (0)

English: 7 credits

???

Math, Engineering & Computer Science: 4 credits

Pre-calculus MAT 200 (4)

Natural Sciences: 32 credits

Fundamentals of Biology I SCB 201 (4)

Fundamentals of Biology II SCB 202 (4)

General Microbiology SCB 260 (4)

Fundamentals of Ecology SCB 265 (4)

General Chemistry I SCC 201 (4)

General Chemistry II SCC 202 (4)

Geographic Information Systems SCG 150 (4)

Environmental Science SCG 250 (4)

Life and Physical Sciences: 4 credits

Any Natural Science course will meet this requirement.

Flexible Common Core: 15 credits

World Cultures: Environmental Sociology SSN 202 (3)

U.S. Experience in its Diversity: Introduction to Macroeconomics SSE 104 (3)

Individual and Society: Environmental Ethics HUP 108 (3)

Creative Expression: ???

TOTAL CREDITS: 62?

The required core will force several changes in this program. The required English composition requirement would have to be increased from six credits to seven credits. The Math requirement would have to be split between the common core and the requirements of the degree at the College. The curriculum would need to be changed to include a course to satisfy the Creative Expression area. Environmental Ethics, Introduction to Macroeconomics, and Environmental Sociology would probably satisfy the three remaining subject areas in the flexible core. The Natural and Applied Science requirement would be satisfied by any of the classes under the Natural Sciences heading. These changes leave the need for 3 credits to satisfy the 5th discipline area and would leave students with 2 credits of electives. In any scenario, a course in the current program would have to be changed to satisfy the core.

Our suggestion is to continue to incorporate more flexibility into the Common Core, with the possibility of students completing 28-32 credits that would satisfy the common core. This could be accomplished on a program by program basis, initiated at the local college level.

2.) What happens to Articulation Agreements? Will the Pathways Initiative erode programs at the Community College level? Articulation agreements have been important for LaGuardia students and have been the result of tremendous efforts by Faculty. We question whether, since the Common Core is hinging satisfaction of discipline area requirements upon learning outcomes, articulation agreements would be in peril as we are no longer matching courses. The initial and second phases of the Pathways project are (1) examining the gen-ed requirements and (2) transferring the agreed upon major courses to the most commonly transferred majors. It is then assumed that the remaining courses that students have taken at the community college level will transfer as electives.

There are several questions surrounding articulation because Pathways will supersede articulation agreements \* although it is still not clear how agreements will be handled in the future. It is also unclear how programs that fall outside the "most transferred" majors currently under examination in phase 2 will be handled.

Again, a HEO in the College Senate discussed this issue during the Jam:

The current proposal does not go nearly far enough in solving the transfer problem for our students. The 30-credit Common Core is not the only place - or major place - where students lose credits and time. The CUNY BOT needs to take the next step: all 60 credits of an AA or AS degree should transfer without difficulty. Students are "guaranteed" that, with a degree, 60 credits will transfer. But, in reality, many of their credits only transfer as free electives for which most degrees have little room. So, the credits are actually wasted. Let's ask CUNY to do the real work and agree on a way for all 60 credits to count.

Community colleges will offer the first 2 years (i.e., 60 credits) and the senior colleges will add the final two years (i.e., 60 credits).

The ad-hoc LaGuardia Pathways Response Committee supports this idea, suggesting that articulation agreements still be in effect and further pursued to follow a 2 + 2 model, governed by specific agreements or partnerships.

One of the largest fears is that the Pathways project might have the unintended consequence of decreasing students' persistence toward the associate's degree. We believe that this will not only erode programs at the community college level, but also ultimately lower CUNY graduation rates since a student completing an associate's degree is more likely to graduate with a bachelor's. A retired Professor in the Humanities Department writes on the Pathways Jam:

It seems to me that the interests of LaGuardia students are best served by providing the incentive for them to complete the AA, AS or AAS degree in one of our carefully constructed and well articulated programs, and then entering a baccalaureate program with the Associate's degree in hand. "Pathways" encourages a "take the 30 credits and run" mentality, encouraging students to leave prematurely, facing increased costs and a resistant milieu, with no actual credential to demonstrate their achievement and support them in meeting a career opportunity, if working full-time becomes a necessity.

An Associate Professor in the English Department writes:

What isn't clear to me yet about Pathways is how it will impact majors at LaGuardia. What Pathways is proposing is 30 credits of general education---our majors at LaGuardia are 60 credit majors---so then, what happens? Does every major at LaGuardia agree that those 30 credits of Pathways satisfy the "general" classes for our majors and then agree that there are 30 credits left within the specific discipline of the major for students to take? How will those remaining credits transfer?

And what is the risk, then, of students who complete the 30 credit Pathways transferring before an AA/AS/AAS degree is completed? Do we risk lowering our graduation rates because student won't see merit in staying at the CC before moving onto the 4 year after their general ed pathway is completed?

Another Assistant English Professor thinks a little differently: Since Pathways proposes a guaranteed smooth transfer process, I predict that students may be more likely to complete an Associate degree once it is in place - so the senior colleges' concern about the erosion of the 12 credit gen ed program may be justified. However, many students I currently advise can't wait to be at a 4 year school; if they have the opportunity to transfer early they will.

It's an interesting point, because when we discussed the erosion of programs at the community college level with fellow Pathway committee members, representatives from senior colleges believed the opposite.

Senior college representatives hypothesized that students will be more apt to graduate from community colleges. According to these representatives, senior colleges are worried about a further erosion of their 12 credit gen-ed college option, which would be reduced to six credits for students transferring with an associate's degree.

The distinction between senior and community colleges was also mentioned by responders in the Jam. While the Professor cited above sees an increase in graduation, she also makes the following observation [There is] the unfair stigma that community colleges carry in the eyes of the 4 year schools. It's a sad perspective to hear from our senior college CUNY colleagues who do not realize that our curriculum is equally competitive.

A College Senate HEO writes on the Jam:

Part of the problem within CUNY is that the senior colleges often adopt a patronizing attitude toward the 2-year colleges and community college students.

a. The evidence is clear that community college transfers do every bit as well academically as students who begin their careers at the senior colleges.

b. The community college atmosphere is more student-friendly during the first two years of college instruction than the senior college model. Community college classes are small (rarely larger than 30 students) and allow students to develop relationships with faculty (not graduate assistants who often deal with individual students in large lecture sections).

c. The senior colleges would be much smaller places without the community college transfer students. Our response needs to document the percentage of senior college students who began as CUNY community college transfers.

While there are arguments from both sides concerning the issues of early transfer and lower graduation rates, it is important to remember that there will be an annual review of the Pathways initiative. The review will have to focus on the traditional enrollment measures, but also take into account the impact that Pathways has on programs at LaGuardia.

3.) Sequential Courses. Some LaGuardia faculty expressed concerns surrounding foreign language courses, as well as those surrounding sequential courses in general. Several people weighed in on the issue of foreign languages and Pathways.

From an Academic Chair:

\* A one semester course in Modern Languages will give students the ability to use a tourist phrase book, but no understanding of how a language is structured and no structure to build on if they choose to take another Modern Language course later on.

Spanish (or any other language) I is a pre-req to level II. No college in the country I know of takes the first semester without the second. If the second semester is the course listed, how can students be required to take Level I as a pre-req.

Another colleague has pointed out:

"The restricted number of possible credits, the nature of the newly defined outcomes, and the number of outcomes that must be met, conspire to essentially exclude beginning and intermediate foreign language courses from the Flexible Core; having no College Option to fall back on, the community colleges would feel the impact of this policy even more severely than the rest."

With this plan, the World's Community College will no longer be able to bring English monolingual students into the multi-lingual worlds they live and WORK in.

From a HEO in the College Senate:

The issue of foreign language instruction - as several of my colleagues have noted - needs more rigorous consideration than it has received thus far. In a richly multicultural and multilingual city like New York and in a more globally-connected world, those who are multilingual are in demand. Since two semesters of a foreign language is the minimum competency recognized throughout the academic world, students should be able to count two semesters as part of the Common Core. There are two ways to accommodate this reality: (1) Students transferring with two semesters of a foreign language should have 33 credits recognized for transfer, or (2) students presenting a 2-semester sequence in a foreign language should be exempted from the arbitrary requirement that the 15 credits in the Flexible Common Core must come from 5 different disciplines.

A Library faculty member suggests we require six credits in foreign language and that that we should go back to 66/126 credits to graduate.

Faculty from Natural Sciences are also concerned. One professor identified the problem as follows:

We have concerns about the effect of the Pathways initiative on sequential courses. Specifically, how will sequential courses be treated in the transfer process when the first part of a two part course sequence is included in the Common Core?

This is an issue with numerous sequential courses in several disciplines at LAGCC. For example, in Natural Sciences, the Fundamentals of Biology course is a sequential course including SCB 201 and SCB 202, with SCB 201 being a candidate for the 4 credit Science requirement under the Common Core. In order for students to receive credit for Fundamentals of Biology from LAGCC, they must take both part one (SCB 201) and part two (SCB 202).

If part one of a sequential course is included in the Common Core and a student completes that course, it will be transferred to their senior college under the Pathways agreement. However, in the senior college, as at LAGCC, the equivalent courses are sequential courses and therefore students are required to complete two semesters in order to receive credit. Will the senior college allow this student to use part one of the sequential course from LAGCC as part one of the equivalent sequential course at the senior college and subsequently allow the student to move on to the senior college's equivalent of part two? Or will the student instead have to take both parts one and part two at the senior college (thereby retaking part one) to receive credit for the year-long course?

In another scenario, a student has taken both parts of a sequential course and again part one is included under the Common Core and will be transferred to their senior college under the Pathways agreement.

What then happens to the credits from part two of the sequence? The senior college could: 1). not accept the credits from part two; 2). accept the part two course as an elective, yet still compel the student to take the senior college's equivalent version of part two, as this course was not included in the Common Core agreement; 3). accept the LAGCC part two as part two of the equivalent sequence and give the student full credit for the year-long sequential course.

We foresee situations where students could be required to repeat courses that are part of the Common Core at the senior college, if those courses are part of a year-long sequence. Therefore, we suggest that clear guidelines be written for the transfer of sequential courses under the Pathways initiative.

An academic Chair in the sciences also expressed concerns about sequential courses and the credit structure of Pathways;

For sequence courses (like 203/204), if the first course is accepted as part of the common core, then the second course may or may not be accepted by the 4-yr college. The 4-yr college may (1) accept the course as a science credit (2) accept the course as an elective, or (3) not accept the course at all and make the student repeat the course.

Another factor to consider: if the student stays at LaGuardia and earns an Associate degree, in order for the student to get credit at LaGuardia for the first course, they have to take the second course. Thus, a student who stays and earns the Associate has no guarantee that the second sequence course will be accepted at the 4-yr college, but they still have to take the 4-yr course.

The sequence courses are a very important consideration in our department because most of our courses are sequence courses. The Environmental Science, Biology, and Liberal Arts: Math and Science require sequence courses.

I am not sure what the 4-yr colleges will do with sequence courses...will they require students to transfer both halves of sequence courses when only one can be used for the common core, or will they discourage students from taking sequence courses (especially when both courses aren't part of the common core).

Several recommendations are made by the Ad-hoc LaGuardia Response Committee:

A clarification for Natural Science courses that satisfy the core and are part of sequential curriculum areas needs to be completed and disseminated.

An adjustment in the flexible common core should allow students who choose to take a foreign language for two semesters to waive the need for a fifth discipline in four subject areas. The credits should remain at 15.

Existing articulation agreements should remain in force and new ones encouraged.

In Michelle Anderson's cover memo that accompanied release of the Pathways common core draft, she writes, "It is possible that some high-credit majors with very specific course demands will not be able to accommodate the requirements of the Common Core." Clarification needs to be made regarding Pathways alterations to recently approved curricula for AS degrees. As in the Environmental Science program, Pathways changes would render the curriculum less useful to both discipline-specific academic preparation and preparation for future employment.