

NYC Councilman Daniel Dromm Speaks at LaGuardia Community College GED Graduation Ceremony

Sixty-two graduates of LaGuardia Community College's Bridge to College and Careers Program, a high school equivalency preparation program, celebrated the achievement of earning their GED at a graduation ceremony on May 30. The group's exam pass rate was 67%, compared with New York State's latest pass rate of 53% in 2012-13.

New York City Councilman Daniel Dromm (District 25), Chair for the Committee on Education, gave the keynote address. "Congratulations to the Bridge to College and Careers Class of 2014 graduates!" said Councilman Dromm. "This is a brilliant program that helps students not only to get their GED but also gives them a foundation for college and beyond.

The students I met with were highly motivated and were thrilled to have achieved their initial goal of getting a GED. I am proud to have participated in their event."

"As a former educator, Councilman Daniel Dromm truly understands the challenges that students face while trying to pursue their education and obtain a High School Equivalency diploma," said Dr. Gail O. Mellow, President of LaGuardia. "We are lucky to have the Councilman as the Chair of the Education Committee, where he is a relentless advocate for students who might have dropped out of school and who struggle in their journey to obtain an education."

The Bridge to College and Careers Program, which is funded by the Robin Hood Foundation, focuses high school equivalency preparation on careers and college readiness. "Contextualized" instruction based on the sectors of business, health or science helps students build their basic academic skills using authentic materials in order to prepare for post secondary education, training or a career in one of the three areas. The program's success has been documented in a report published by MDRC titled, "Enhancing GED Instruction to Prepare Students for College and Careers: Early Success in LaGuardia Community College's Bridge to Health and Business Program" (). To date, more than 1,000 students have been served.

Of the 62 recent graduates, 10 are enrolled in a degree program at LaGuardia and 18 have applied for the Fall 2014 semester; two are participating in a Community Health Worker training program at Make The Road New York; one is in LaGuardia's Green Jobs Training Program; and two have gotten a raise at their job.

"Do you know what it's like to hear the word 'no' over and over again when applying to jobs? I do. For many years I was working dead end jobs, not getting anywhere. I kept hearing 'no' because I did not have my high school diploma," said student speaker Vinod Dowlani. "This was the main reason I restarted my education: to have a better future."

Currently enrolled at LaGuardia as a Business Administration major, the Bridge to Business graduate noted that the writing and math skills he developed in the program have been very useful in his college studies. After earning his Associates Degree, Dowlani plans to obtain a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration.

The second student speaker, Bridge to Health graduate Taneisha Tomlinson, said the program's coursework introduced her to medical terminology that she would encounter in a healthcare career. She also noted that workshops on careers, resume writing and job searching were very informative. "We were able to research the career path we wanted to pursue, with a focus on how profitable the field would be in the future, and even which colleges provide the field of study," she explained.

"The program opened many doors of opportunity for us," said Tomlinson. "Thanks to our instructors, we were able to set realistic, attainable goals that we could accomplish and that will allow us to better our lives." Tomlinson, who aspires to become a Registered Nurse, will begin her college studies at LaGuardia this fall.

"If someone came to me three years ago and predicted that I would be graduating from LaGuardia Community College as an honor student and would be accepted by every four-year college that I applied to, with a scholarship, including New York University, Hofstra, Hunter, and Adelphi, I would have laughed my head off," said Bridge Program alumni honoree Modupe Marks, a 2012 graduate. "I had just lost my business and was moving from one dead end job to another. ... I was 41 years old and left school over 20 years before. Finally, I decided there was nothing wrong in trying for the GED."

The Nigerian immigrant, now a Psychology major at LaGuardia, will graduate this summer with an AAS Degree and plans to transfer to New York University, where she wants to study neuroscience. She has been on the Dean's List every semester, is part of the Honor Society, founded the college's African Roots Society club, works with the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives on the Friends of Koch project that will be featured in The New York Times, and works on campus as an office assistant and tutor.

"I still have a long way to go with my education and have no plans of stopping any time soon," Marks said. "Now I know that I can do anything that I set my heart on because I had a good foundation through the Bridge Program."

Various student achievement awards were also presented at the May 30 ceremony.

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LaGuardia Community College located in Long Island City, Queens, was founded in 1971 as a bold experiment in opening the doors of higher education to all, and we proudly carry forward that legacy today. LaGuardia educates students through over 50 degree, certificate and continuing education programs, providing an inspiring place for students to achieve their dreams. Upon graduation, LaGuardia students' lives are transformed as family income increases 17%, and students transfer to four-year colleges at three times the national average. Part of the City University of New York (CUNY), LaGuardia is a nationally recognized leader among community colleges for boundary-breaking success education underserved students. At LaGuardia we imagine new ideas, create new curriculum and pioneer programs to make our community and our country stronger. Visit www.lagcc.cuny.edu to learn more.