

## **Model Citizen & Civility Committee Report**

### MODEL CITIZEN SUBCOMMITTEE

#### **Center for the Study of Brooklyn**

The Center for the Study of Brooklyn can play a major role in furthering Brooklyn College's efforts to strengthen its perception and role as a model citizen in the borough. To this end the committee suggests that the center become a leading source of information on public policy in Brooklyn. The center can accomplish this by bringing to bear its expertise on issues that are crucial to Brooklyn's future as a borough but that often fall low on the agendas of Manhattan-based decision-makers and media.

The Center for the Study of Brooklyn was launched with a February 16, 2005 conference called "Starting the Conversation." Leaders of non-profit, neighborhood and business groups and government officials helped to form a research agenda responsive to community needs. The college should aim to build on this positive beginning. The college can deepen its good citizenship by having the center provide timely, non-partisan research to the Brooklyn community and serve as a sounding board that draws attention to important public policy issues. The center, in this way, strengthens the connectedness of the college to Brooklyn as a whole and establishes a greater voice for the borough in the public discussion of issues that affect us living and working in Brooklyn.

#### **Continuing Education**

The committee feels strongly that the mission of the Office of Continuing Education is central to the college's continued involvement in the affairs of the borough of Brooklyn.

The goals of Continuing Education are:

- Providing lifelong learning opportunities to adults and non-traditional students;
- Providing increased access to degree granting programs;
- Supporting the model citizen mission of the institution;
- Generating revenue for the college.

As part of its commitment to support the college's role as citizen, Continuing Education in partnership with the academic, business and professional communities must continue to develop and implement quality educational programs that address current educational and workforce development needs in the borough. These programs will consist of credit (possibly credit bearing clusters) and non-credit courses, offered both on campus and at offsite locations throughout Brooklyn. It will explore offering inexpensive programs, particularly in such areas as tutoring and test preparation courses for matriculated students.

The resources of the college will be extended through innovative approaches to scheduling which will:

- Allow for utilization of classroom space on campus for courses;
- Set pricing of adult education programs through evaluation and determination as to how Brooklyn College can offer similar programs at competitive prices;
- Identify possible locations for offsite training, with particular focus on schools so courses can be made available to parents.
- Support linkages with community based businesses, service agencies, and educational institutions to further the ability of the college to meet changing educational and training needs in the borough.

The Office of Continuing Education will coordinate with the AVP of Enrollment Management to obtain visibility for adult education programs.

### **Welcoming Centers**

In recent decades, local and national security concerns have increasingly led to measures that resulted in the perception of Brooklyn College as a “closed” campus. Counteracting this perception is important to Brooklyn College’s efforts to be a good citizen within Brooklyn. One approach is the establishment of a Welcoming Center organized along the lines of the Information Booth currently located in Boylan Hall. A Welcoming Center could be located at one or more entry points to the campus. Visitors could ask questions about the college before having to negotiate necessary security procedures. Trained students ready to direct visitors to various offices, resources, events, buildings, etc. would staff the Welcoming Centers.

There would be multiple benefits to creating Welcoming Centers at the college. It would have the benefit of offering Brooklyn College students opportunities to interact with members of the surrounding community (and other visitors) while working on campus, either for pay or, as part of a related initiative, for internship or service credit. It would also reduce the burden on the Safety and Security officers to provide information and directions at busy college entrances. This would allow security personnel to focus on legitimate public safety concerns.

This initiative would link the college and the community in a more positive manner, benefit students, put a more personal and friendly face on the campus, and potentially makes the campus more secure.

### **The Community Partnerships Roundtable**

As a part of the college’s model citizen efforts it is suggested by the committee that the college host an annual event to celebrate and develop its community partnerships while also providing space for the formation of new alliances between the college and local community-based organizations and businesses. Faculty members and staff, college departments and/or campus organizations with existing collaborations, and members of the community will present their work through panels, workshops, symposia and poster presentations. The roundtable will facilitate:

- A forum for community-based research projects by faculty/staff, students and Brooklyn based practitioners;
- The discussion of field-based internships or service-learning programs”
- The initiation of critical dialogues between community members and Brooklyn College on current issues confronting the Borough of Brooklyn;
- The highlighting of scholarship supporting linkages between the college and community;
- An awards dinner to acknowledge the community’s contribution to the college and the best practices of college-community partnerships.

### **Standing Committee**

We propose that there be a standing committee composed of all those BC faculty and staff who are involved in community-based work such as service learning and internships and/or work at the college in positions that directly serves the communities of Brooklyn. This committee should meet once each semester, report on their activities and network in order to maximize synergy and cooperation between all projects at BC. The provost should convene this standing committee.

### **Internships/Service Learning**

The committee recognizes that educating students in the area of civic responsibility is an important responsibility of the college and can further its role as a model citizen in the borough. By preparing students to be responsible, productive members of the community, Brooklyn College strengthens its own role as a model citizen. Internships and service learning are key components to this process. Service learning should be supported as an innovative pedagogy that effectively and dynamically teaches academic content in an applied context. The committee suggests that the college continue to support the creation of hands on learning opportunities in the community that focus on direct student involvement. Community organizations, both for-profit and not for-profit, need to be incorporated into this effort. Academic and non-academic paid and unpaid internships, as well as service learning programs, need to be expanded. Emphasis needs to be placed on effective collaborations between the college and providers of local learning and work opportunities.

### **Database**

For Brooklyn College to be a model citizen in Brooklyn, members of the college need to know of all the existing community based activities that are integrated into courses, administrative offices, and special programs on the Brooklyn College campus. One suggestion to accomplish this is to create a comprehensive database that includes all community based activities occurring at the college. It is strongly suggested that the database be available on the web and accessible to all members of the campus. This database should be made available to all incoming faculty as one means of encouraging innovative teaching practices.

## **Video Festival**

Under the umbrella of its initiatives to reach out to individuals in Brooklyn communities and draw them to the College campus, the College would sponsor an annual "Brooklyn High School Video Festival." High school students from across the borough would enter their videos in the Festival. A panel of (preferably Brooklyn) filmmakers would judge the videos and award prizes for the best video in different categories. On the day of the Festival, which would be open to the public, the best videos would be shown. There could also be workshops for students on creating videos, writing film scripts, camera work, etc. Faculty and graduate students in the BC TV and Film department would offer these workshops. The Festival would be an opportunity for students in existing College-sponsored programs to present the videos that they have created, and to interest high school students in considering the College as a choice for their own education.

## **CIVILITY SUBCOMMITTEE**

### **Define Core Values**

To increase civility on campus, the College must first create a value statement that communicates the College's core values i.e. what the institution stands for and what the institution expects of those who work here. The purpose of the value statement is to describe the ideal campus environment, to define expectations of behavior for achieving that environment, and to inform all employees of the nexus between their work and the College achieving its mission.

However, it is not enough just to develop a value statement. The core values must be institutionalized so that senior executives, faculty, administrators, and staff know the core values, understand the core values, and work to achieve those values. To reinforce the message, the President, Provost, and all other senior executives should discuss the values with the campus community at every opportunity. Department chairs and administrators should encourage faculty and staff to translate the values into action steps. Lastly, to ensure the values are adhered to, a system of rewards should be developed to encourage behavior that comports with the values. For example, if working collaboratively is a value then those persons/offices who engage in collaborative endeavors should be highlighted.

### **Create a more Welcoming and Positive Environment**

Civility improves when people work in a welcoming and positive environment. Over the last few years several initiatives were developed to create this type of environment; these initiatives include the new employee orientation, the employee-of-the-month program, and the reception to honor an outstanding department. We believe these initiatives should be expanded. For example, the new employee orientation should include a mid-career orientation so long-term employees are made aware of benefits and programs that were not available when they began working for the College. To expand participation in the employee-of-the-month program and to create another venue for

employee interaction, all employees should be invited to a reception for the honoree. This can be a low cost event that gives everyone an opportunity to meet the employee-of-the-month and may also encourage others to nominate employees for this honor. The reception to honor departments that deserve special recognition should be an annual event.

The College is committed to the values and policies that enhance respect for individuals and their cultures. In fact, the College's pluralism is one of its distinguishing characteristics. The goal is for all employees to feel acknowledged, respected, and appreciated. To this end, all college-wide committees should be representative of our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-generational workforce. The College should also provide diversity training to enhance communication among employees. Differences like race, gender, religion, age, etc, affect our individual perspective and these differences may lead to misunderstandings that impede efforts to create an environment of mutual understanding and respect. Our commitment to diversity should also be reflected in the language that we use. Faculty should be referred to as junior and senior, not young and old. Students from other countries should be referred to as international students and not aliens.

Employees who have supervisory responsibilities play an important role in helping the College achieve a more welcoming and positive environment. A supervisor sets the tone for his/her unit. Although resources are limited, there are several no-cost actions that supervisors can take to be supportive of employees. Supervisors can: arrange personal meetings with employees to acknowledge a job well done, write positive letters for insertion in an employee file when someone has done a particularly good job, or hold brown bag lunch meetings to find out about employee concerns. In order to support supervisors the College must provide training to enable managers to more effectively praise, motivate, and coach employees.

Some other ideas for creating a more welcoming and positive environment include:

- ❑ Balance death notices with good news like births, marriages, etc.;
- ❑ Send birthday acknowledgements via email (E.g. all May birthdays get e-greeting);
- ❑ Have a disc jockey at the holiday party to encourage a more festive environment; and
- ❑ Create an employee suggestion program to reward ideas that increase productivity and save money.

### **Improve Communication**

Lastly, creating an environment of civil engagement means improving what we communicate and how we communicate. Are we communicating the correct information? What is the tone of our communication? How we speak to one another is just as important as what we say. Good communication means the information is

transparent, the message or answer is consistent, and the message reaches all parties and is not limited to a select few.

Faculty, staff, and students have identified getting the “runaround” as a large communication issue on campus. The runaround manifests itself in many different forms. Often the form is verbal with someone being given incorrect/incomplete information, but the incorrect/incomplete information can be in written form, such as in bulletins, telephone directories, or global email lists that have not been properly updated. The committee believes that ensuring more consistency in the information we communicate will help alleviate the runaround issue. To this end, the following solutions were suggested:

- ❑ Update all College materials so that current requirements, programs, procedures etc. are reflected;
- ❑ Ensure all employees know the correct information in their purview. This should help avoid the same office, same question, different answer problem; and
- ❑ Create an office manual of standard operating procedures for every office so new employees can quickly familiarize themselves with office procedures and information. This will also mitigate the effects of the information gap when a long-term employee leaves.

To further increase civility on campus interdisciplinary/collaborative work should be encouraged to foster a sense of community. Right now, employees, particularly faculty, mostly know only those individuals within their own departments. This limited interaction with the College community does not encourage a sense of interconnectedness that stems from an environment where interdisciplinary work and collaboration are the norm. To improve collaboration, the committee suggests the following:

- ❑ Encourage interdisciplinary work by creating an award for the best interdisciplinary research and/or project;
- ❑ Hold community building events like “Art Around the College” where large canvasses are placed around the campus that faculty, staff, and students can decorate; and
- ❑ Increase the numbers of employees who participate in intramurals by encouraging offices and departments to field teams.

Lastly, on-going education and training are an integral part of creating and maintaining a civil environment. The principles of civility must be reinforced. Some suggestions for on-going education and training are:

- ❑ Institute customer service training like CUNY Connections for front-line personnel;
- ❑ Provide mentors to incoming employees; and
- ❑ Ensure all managers receive training on the fundamentals of supervision.