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Community News

Brooklyn College Creates Children's Studies Major

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MIDWOOD — In response to steadily increasing student demand, Brooklyn College, a pioneer in the field of children's studies, has created a new 30-credit interdisciplinary and interdepartmental bachelor of arts degree in children's studies.

Offered for the first time in the fall 2009 semester, the children's studies major integrates knowledge from disciplines in the arts, humanities, social and biological sciences, business, medicine and the law. The new degree, the first of its kind in New York State, gives students the benefit of perspectives from varied disciplines as well as research opportunities with authorities in the field, relevant internships and career counseling.

In 1991, Brooklyn College was the first academic institution in the nation to develop an interdisciplinary liberal arts children's studies program — a model since emulated by more than 35 colleges and universities across the nation and more than 20 universities internationally. The college has offered minors in children's studies since 1994 and concentrations since 2001.

Dr. Karen Gould, Brooklyn College president, said, "For almost two decades, Brooklyn College has been a pioneer and a leader in the area of children's studies. With the addition of this new major to our curriculum, we are enhancing our already robust program, while helping to broaden the circle of knowledge and career opportunities for our students."

Gertrud Lenzer, professor of sociology and children's studies, who established the field of children's studies at the college in 1991, said, "The introduction of the children's studies bachelor of arts degree represents the culmination of years of preparatory work. It also responds to ever increasing numbers of students choosing and graduating with CS minors or 30 credit concentrations over the last decade.

"The holistic approach of our program provides students at Brooklyn College with a unique perspective on the historical and contemporary role of children and their interplay with society, government, politics, as well as within the legal, medical, educational and social service systems. At the same time, we seek to advance the rights of children who cannot advocate for themselves," Lenzer added.

Included in the program objective of the children's studies major are:

Increasing students' knowledge of local, national and international issues concerning children and youth; Providing training in traditional, contemporary and evolving research methodologies for studying the well-being of the whole child;

Equipping students for future careers in professions and occupations related to children and youth; and promoting awareness of child-related issues for students in their roles as parents, citizens and professionals.

Among the diverse courses available in the children's studies major are development of the national and international children's rights movement; the study of children in extreme situations of social, cultural, political, and familial disruption including war, natural disaster, famine, poverty, abuse, and terrorism; the role law plays in the many aspects of the lives of children; contemporary understandings of what constitutes child abuse and neglect and the controversies surrounding definitions, interventions, and legal processes; children and disability; the history of children, public policy, and the law in the United States; speech and language development.

Additionally, under Lenzer's leadership in 1997, Brooklyn College established the Children's Studies Center with mission mandates tied to research, policy and public service. Serving as a think tank and catalyst for change, the center has hosted forums on public policy for legislators, students, teachers, health care providers, and judicial and law enforcement personnel. Center faculty and staff—experts in the field of children's studies—regularly participate in panels, testify in support of legislation, and conduct research to further the rights of children.

To learn more about the Children Studies program and Center activities, please visit:

<http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/pub/departments/childrenstudies>. Founded in 1930, Brooklyn College is one of the 11 senior colleges of the City University of New York. The college ranks in the Top 10 nationally in Princeton Review's 2006 guidebook, America's Best Value Colleges. The four-year liberal arts college is located on a 26-acre campus in the most dynamic New York City borough.