CUNY Welcomes New Community College

The New Community College, approved by the Board of Trustees on February 28th, will open its doors to 500 new CUNY community college students in July 2012 – the University’s first new community college to open in New York City in over four decades.

The college, which will initially be located at 50 West 40th Street overlooking Bryant Park, will grow to serve 3,000 students once it moves to its permanent location at 59th Street and 9th Avenue, an important step to address surging enrollment at CUNY’s community colleges. Chancellor Goldstein initiated the push to create a new community college in 2008 not only to accommodate the growing population of community college students, but also to develop a new and imaginative model of education that would increase retention and graduation rates and could be replicated system-wide and beyond.

The new college is headed by Founding President Scott E. Evenbeck, formerly a psychology professor and dean of University College at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. The distinctive features of the program include a summer bridge program; full-time enrollment for the first year; a common first-year curriculum that provides twice the normal time for math; a professional studies component with worksite experience; and majors in fields with positive employment forecasts and pathways toward bachelor’s degrees.

The New Community College is benefitting from the new focus on bolstering community college success by the Gates Foundation and other leading philanthropists. The Gates Foundation, which has announced a major commitment to funding programs designed to help raise community college completion rates, has made two grants to the New Community college for planning, totaling close to $1.1 million. The Carnegie Corporation has provided $300,000 in support. Fund-raising for the New Community college has been conducted by members of the planning team, who have led the two-year effort to create the school.

Private Support Helps CUNY BA Turn 40

The transformative effect of student scholarships is a well-known fact of higher education. At CUNY, this is perhaps nowhere more clearly demonstrated than at the CUNY Baccalaureate program, more commonly known as “CUNY BA.” As part of the celebration of its 40th anniversary this year, CUNY BA is highlighting the role of its private benefactors in supporting scholarships and nurturing student success.

Over the past decade and a half, CUNY BA has raised scholarship support for more than 800 students. Thomas W. Smith, managing partner of Prescott Investors, established an academic fellowship program in 1994 and has since donated over $3 million to support more than 600 students. Other major donors have included Richard and Mary Beth Ketchum, who provide scholarships for students studying education or human services and for studying abroad and Diego Hidalgo, an international diplomat who has provided scholarships for students in Political Science/International Affairs and the Arts. CUNY BA has also received grants from the Diamond, Ford and International Study Abroad Foundations, among others.

In the late 1960s, a group of faculty and students suggested that CUNY should allow individual faculty and students to define programs of study, with access to courses across campuses, and in February 1971, the NYS Board of Higher Education authorized a University-wide Bachelor of Arts Degree, to be based at the Graduate Center. First known as the CUNY Baccalaureate Program and renamed in 2008 CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies, the degree is still commonly called “CUNY BA.”

Mentoring is CUNY BA’s cornerstone. In any semester, more than 400 full-time professors work with students as they build their individualized degrees. CUNY BA students are regularly recipients of major national and CUNY awards. There are almost 7,000 graduates, a majority of whom have gone on to graduate education and work in careers related to their self-designed studies. The program’s success was recently recognized by the 2010 Middle States Association reaccreditation process, which called CUNY BA, “The gem of the University.”