

Building Understanding of High School Students' Transition to College

Nelson Nunez Rodriquez, Jacqueline DiSanto, Antonios Varelas,
Sarah Brennan, Kate Wolfe, and Ernest Ialongo
Hostos Community College of CUNY

A cohort comprised of high school and college teachers met for one year to build understanding of the critical transition of high school students to college. The seminar analyzed how current reforms in both systems will impact student skill development and preparedness for college work. The discussions highlighted the need to clarify expectations for college freshmen regarding syllabus policies, deadline observations, and the importance of defining consistent classroom management strategies. This program also focused on the need to increase the dialogue between high school teachers and college professors as there exists reciprocal unawareness regarding curricular changes and the learning environment faced by students at both academic levels.

A productive and longstanding dialogue between high school and university systems is an essential partnership for any educational scheme, yet it often remains elusive in practice (Baker, 2001). This dialogue is critical to develop a deep understanding of the expectations, issues, and changes in secondary education by the higher education faculty. The high school educators must also cultivate reciprocal awareness. In this regard, the implementation of the Common Core School Standards (CCSS) in high schools across the United States (US) reinforces the need for this dialogue. This reform defines expectations for the skills high school students must gain in English Language Arts, Literacy, and Mathematics in order to be college- and career-ready when they graduate from high school (Mathis, 2010). These uniform standards of proficiency inform teachers and parents on student learning objectives and achievements, and they create linkages between expectations from pre-K through college completion. Students impacted by CCSS will populate US college classrooms in the near future. As a consequence, there is a need for dialogue between high school and urban public universities, including community colleges, serving this student population in the US. A successful passage from the former to the latter requires building mutual understanding regarding current trends and ongoing reforms within respective curricula. The alignment of secondary and higher education curricula can also serve to motivate and engage students as they transition to the college (Jenkins, 2011). Indeed, the level of preparedness of first-year student populations has a significant impact on the student retention and completion in the US higher education system (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009).

What are the challenges and opportunities in making these plans work within individual classrooms and across high school and college campuses? Are college faculty members prepared to communicate classroom expectations to incoming first-year students based on general and specific high school experiences

resulting from CCSS? And, as public universities constantly revise the curriculum, what lessons have we learned? What challenges remain? Do our respective experiences inform one another?

This work describes the findings from a one-year seminar between community college faculty at an urban university in the northeast US teamed with teachers from local high schools to discuss pedagogy, the CCSS, and the skills and habits of students transitioning from secondary to higher education. This partnership provided real-life information derived from the professional experience of the high school teachers working with critical issues related to CCSS implementation to which the college faculty had not been fully exposed. This experience explored ways to understand student transition into post-secondary education and created a seminar model that helped to build mutual understanding of high school and university cultures. Overall, this practice aimed to improve college faculty understanding of high school reforms related to the development of student critical thinking, scientific literacy, and engagement; expose the high school teacher to pedagogical practices used to develop academic skills at the college level; and enhance the knowledge about assessment strategies and curriculum design used in both arenas. In summation, it sought to build mutual understanding about the progression of student skills development from high school to college-level developmental, introductory, and higher order college courses.

Methodology

A year-long program brought together six faculty members at Hostos Community College, which is part of the largest urban public university in the US, and six teachers working in high schools located in the same urban area where the community college is located. On one hand, college faculty who participated belonged to chemistry, education, history, and psychology disciplines and included untenured and tenured faculty at assistant

and associate professorial ranks. On the other hand, high school teachers belonged to biology, English, and mathematics. This variety of content specialties and years of experience in the profession brought different viewpoints and naturally enriched the conversation. Indeed, one of the college faculty participants led the institution Center for Teaching and Learning for several years and other faculty participants were part of this center's faculty council. Therefore, all these instructors had been involved in several previous collaborations and knew each other's interest in these types of dialogues (Nunez Rodriguez, Brennan, Varelas, & Hutchins, & DiSanto, 2015; Varelas, Wolfe, & Ialongo, 2015). This acknowledged interest served as the initial criterion to select college faculty participants.

The selection of high school faculty required collaboration from many, including the Office of Institutional Research, Department of Education (DOE) liaisons, Graduate NYC! personnel, high school principals, and adjunct faculty from the participating college who teach in high schools. These college's high school faculty were approached first. Being unable to participate, the program developers—two participant college faculty—reached out to the Office of Institutional Research for data to examine the high schools from which most of the college freshmen come. Simultaneously, the DOE and Graduate NYC! liaisons were identified because these representatives had a long-standing collaboration with the New York High school system. These liaisons graciously identified principals who were willing to nominate and support their high school faculty. Further, the program developers used their collegial networks to recommend high school instructors as possible participants. The high school faculty who committed early also helped in the recruitment process by nominating their colleagues who expressed interest in participating after learning about the seminar.

The college is surrounded by many high schools. However, the differences in the school and college class schedules, the modest incentive being offered to participants, and the regularly scheduled monthly seminar meetings seemed to pose a bigger challenge to potential participants than originally expected. The college campus was established as the only meeting place for the seminar meetings, which meant that the high school faculty had to leave their institutions at the final bell and navigate all the obstacles associated with urban commuting to arrive in a timely manner. As an additional incentive, the college faculty secured funding to provide dinner for the participants at each meeting. Each high school faculty also received a roundtrip Metro Card and a modest stipend at the end of the seminar, both of which were funded by the Graduate NYC! grant.

The commitment of six high school faculty was crucial to the design of the seminar. The program director wanted a truly collaborative learning environment and so designed the seminar facilitation to be generated by pairs of faculty, one high school faculty with one college faculty. The even match-up was successful in creating a safe and supportive environment where educators learned from one another.

The setting was the South Bronx, one of the poorest Congressional districts in the United States. The college involved in the program serves almost 7,000 students. The majority of this population is low-income and first-generation. Additionally, 60 percent are Hispanic, and 22 percent are African-American. Most—86 percent of students—require remediation in at least one basic skill area, whether mathematics, reading, or writing (Office of Institutional Research, 2014).

Taking into consideration this student body profile, the seminar was intended to dissect assignment and assessment tools, thus reconciling college faculty expectations and high school student preparedness. Each month one college instructor and one high school teacher facilitated a topic-based session centered on common challenges and opportunities in preparing students to successfully transition from high school to college. Some of the topics discussed were: concrete curriculum design, dissecting assignment and assessment tools, reconciling college faculty expectations and high school student preparedness, and understanding non-academic factors that influence student achievement.

Seven monthly meetings took place during the 2013-2014 academic year. Two instructors facilitated each meeting: one high school teacher paired by shared interest with one college faculty member. This arrangement organically created ownership of the process during each session as all participants could choose their facilitated topic and the group member with whom to work. Meetings took place on Thursdays after the public school day ended and were held for 90 minutes at the involved college. This time frame considered both cohorts' availability. The seminar sessions started at 4:15 pm to allow teachers from nearby schools to reach the college campus. This consideration was critical to sustaining the long-term goals of the seminar overtime. A final presentation open to all college faculty and high school representatives was held at the college. All participants filled out a pre-experience survey during the first seminar and a post-experience survey during the last seminar session (Appendix A).

A regular custom of the seminar meetings was for all participants to share their thoughts at the conclusion of each session by writing in a journal. Each session devoted the last ten minutes of the meeting to this reflective practice. The journal booklets were collected

so that these entries could be shared with the presenters of the subsequent session. This allowed the presenters to consider these notes during their preparation of the next discussion that they would facilitate. Thus, subsequent presentations were built, in part, on previously shared outcomes. Furthermore, following the completion of the seminar, the program director and two faculty participants analyzed all of the written reflections and the pre- and post-surveys to compile a final report summarizing all program take-aways. This analysis revealed common themes expressed by all of the participants, as well as the ideas that each cohort took from the other and from the collective discussions.

Program Outcomes

The Seminar Format as a Product

It was agreed during the first seminar meeting that a different pair of faculty would be facilitate each of the following sessions. In doing so, all participants took ownership of the project while nurturing a safe atmosphere between both cohorts. Indeed, during the first seminar all participants from the high school and college provided feedback for the initial organizational plan. As a result, the seminar timeframe and discussion topics emanated from this collective discussion. Table 1 illustrates the topics discussed. Seminars were developed based on short presentations and extensive conversations among participants. This created a healthy atmosphere for discussion as both high school and college teachers realized that they are facing similar challenges. Written comments from the participants reinforced the critical value of dialogue and idea sharing in the processes of successfully assessing and changing teaching strategies. Both high school and college faculty cohorts celebrated the opportunity to have a collaborative space for individual and collective reflections on teaching practice. They also noticed the value of having a safe space to conceptualize their work while remaining purposeful and mindful regarding the class syllabus. This was also reflected in the attendance of meetings, which was 70 percent or higher.

Our seminar arrangement generated a safe atmosphere that also embraced dissimilar preparation among participants to address the CCSS reform changes. The lack of requisite training of instructors to implement CCSS reform and other initiatives at both college and high school levels usually generated reluctance and fear about exploring new alternatives. Systematic faculty development initiatives should embrace faculty safe spaces to discuss and reflect on pedagogy. In this regard, the seminar developers clarified that all discussion should revolve around reform effects on student preparation. Other appropriate venues should be used to address the lack

of consensus that usually arises from any new program implemented in education systems.

Take-Aways

The seminar structure allowed each participant to reflect in writing at the end of each session. This strategy was critical to document participants' beliefs and ideas as the seminar progressed and the final thoughts of the participants at the end of the program, in addition to the pre-survey and post-survey that all participants filled out at the beginning and at the end of the seminar, respectively. Overall, survey results demonstrate that most participants (11 out of 12) either agreed or strongly agreed that, at the end of the seminar, they had a better understanding of the expectations that high school instructors have of graduating seniors. All participants indicated strong agreement that there is value in cross-institutional conversations that explore teaching practices at the high school and college levels. Most faculty members (11 out of 12) also indicated that they had at least some flexibility to adjust curricula based on ideas generated in this collaboration; they were either willing or very willing to change teaching practices based on ideas generated by this collaboration. All participants indicated they would be willing to participate in similar collaborations in the future. Only two faculty members had had past experience with cross-institutional collaborations like this one. All participants felt that this project either met or exceeded expectations.

Participant Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

Participants emphasized the need to balance faculty and student responsibilities in the learning process. It was recommended that faculty shift in practice from lecturers to facilitators; the group sought an increased role for student engagement in the learning process. In this regard, several participants developed awareness about the need to use creative classroom strategies to foster debate and discussion in both math and humanities classes. A college instructor shared an experience about successfully implementing a debate/disagreement interactive class format that helped students to better understand complex concepts and material. Other aspects discussed in the seminar included the ongoing debate between teaching skills or knowledge, syllabus creation, lesson planning, deadline policies, and non-academic factors influencing student learning.

Content versus skills. The emphasis on content or skills is a longstanding debate among educators (Tinto, 1999). The conversation and feedback revealed that college faculty still struggle to find the right balance of teaching content and developing skills such as reading comprehension. This debate has been part of nation-

Table 1
Summary of Meeting Topics and Schedule

Meetings	Topics
Meeting 1 Facilitated by two college instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-survey to assess teacher and faculty attitudes, and expectations - What Are Common Core Standards and current university curriculum revision, and how does each shape the high school/college classrooms and learning environments? - Seminar structure discussion: Ideas from all participants shaped final seminar structure
Meeting 2 Facilitated by a college instructor and a high school instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Syllabus structure instructional planning - Alignment of course outcomes, assignments and assessment tools with university curriculum revision, college or high school student learning- outcomes, and Common Core Standards in high school or skill core-competencies in college
Meeting 3 Facilitated by a college instructor and a high school instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fostering curiosity/motivation to learn (factors that generate it in both faculty and students)
Meeting 4 Facilitated by a college instructor and a high school instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class expectations (for both students and faculty) - Class objectives (connection with course objectives, Common Core, and core competencies)
Meeting 5 Facilitated by a college instructor and a high school instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assignment Design
Meeting 6 Facilitated by a college instructor and a high school instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Course Assessment (its connection with current university curriculum revision) - Post survey to assess teacher and faculty attitude, expectation, and pedagogical changes based on the seminar
Meeting 7 Facilitated by all participants and open to college faculty and high school communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seminar outcomes: participant change regarding teaching beliefs, types of assessment, and strategies used in high school and college
Meeting 8 Dissemination Plan All Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final report with recommendations was submitted to the funding agency - Findings were presented at a university-wide conference
College Faculty College Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Findings were presented at a national conference

wide conversations in the US about pedagogy. Recommendations from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) brought attention to the need to attune higher education with our volatile and interdependent world (AACU, 2007). Based on these reports, our society expects from college

graduates critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, problem solving, and cultural competencies regardless of the specific majors. Many seminar conversations revolved around alternative ways to improve student skills in math and language arts. One high school instructor shared that CCSS represents an opportunity

to teach and understand mathematics as a process/inquiry-based subject rather than a right-or-wrong answer approach. In this regard, high school teachers found an advantage in recategorizing the overall objective of a content area to explain the complexity of reading comprehension in high school. One secondary teacher reported that students were more receptive to the statement, “I am not going to teach you how to read; I will help you to better understand what you are reading.” This culture shift is particularly helpful for English language learners who simultaneously are learning a new language and new content. The awareness of these math and English high school instructors regarding the need to develop student cognitive skills plus disciplinary knowledge in preparation for the college transition found a certain level of reluctance among parents, as the instructors reported. However, the high school instructors participating in the seminar celebrated that college instructors validated these secondary school interventions fostering better preparation for student transition to college.

Syllabus versus lesson plan. College faculty expressed that they are more likely to pay greater attention to the content of a syllabus whereas high school teachers articulated a strong focus on lesson planning. College faculty understand syllabi as living documents, and revisions during the term are discussed with students; therefore, they trust the information found in the syllabus. College faculty participants who teach introductory courses reported that first-year students experience a shock when transitioning from a structured classroom based on lesson plans to college classrooms that rely on the broader syllabus. Students usually do not assimilate excessive syllabus information during the first days of class. Weekly updates regarding class pace and expectations were recommended. In this regard, initial classroom experiences appear to be critical in clarifying student and instructor expectations, defining class tone, and creating a safe atmosphere for learning. Several first-day-of-class strategies to learn student names and appraise their knowledge, background, and attitudes toward learning were shared (Mortiboys, 2012).

Deadline policies. College faculty working with new students recognized the need to reinforce policies and deadlines as first-year students bring little understanding about necessary college skills. College faculty assume students bring habits related to deadline observations, maintaining good attendance, and other policies shared in syllabi, and this assumption is not necessarily accurate. High school instructors recognized the need to develop a culture of deadline observation. However, further dialogues are required with high school administrators regarding this point as it seems that a change of culture at the administrative

level is required to support high school instructors who are willing to reinforce this policy.

Non-academic factors. Both the college and high school cohorts recognized the need to decrease social distance between students and instructors as a way to address their social needs, backgrounds, and expectations regarding college education (Argaugh, 2001). For college faculty, it is a constant challenge to find the right line to maintain a balance among academic rigor, engagement, and establishment of rapport with students (Nunez Rodriguez, 2013). How can we reconcile the social and cooperative learning habits that high school students are bringing to college? Is this factor influencing the first-year student experience? Student fear and lack of confidence should be acknowledged by building environments that increase academic and social proximity between student and instructor and help them to develop a sense of belonging to higher education (Tierney, 2004). Evidence suggests that, if students with lack of preparation for college work connect somehow with the higher education system, they persist and develop a sense of belonging regardless of the academic barriers (Jensen, 2011). These aspects influencing student persistence are particularly critical in the student population served by institutions involved in this seminar.

Classroom management. Both high school and college instructor cohorts referred to the need to convert problematic situations into teachable moments. We should validate the role of mistakes in the learning process and build an atmosphere based on mutual trust and respect by valuing honest student feedback throughout the semester. Seminar discussions pointed out the need to maintain systematic and clear communication with students about class expectations. Otherwise, class management can be disrupted as students consistently misunderstand the instructor expectations. This approach opens several questions such as the role of note taking today. What is its usefulness during this digital learning era, as many students prefer taking pictures of the board or recording the instructor’s voice? Many faculty post recorded lectures on different digital platforms. Other students, as auditory learners, need to listen before writing in order to understand (Raupers, 2003; Roberts, 2003). It seems that both high school and college instructors assume that students will have learned how to take notes—and the importance of doing so—at some point during their academic journey. The same applies for appropriate behavior in academic settings. Clear guidelines regarding classroom behavior in academic settings should be explicitly explained to students when transitioning from high school to college. Many higher education institutions implemented a freshmen seminar as a high-impact educational practice intended to develop all these college skills in newly enrolled students (AACU, 2010). In this regard, several high-

impact practices such as first-year seminars and experiences, learning communities, and common intellectual experiences develop students' college preparedness at academic, behavioral, and social levels. These practices reinforce expected college behavior and prepare students with the intellectual and practical competencies such as critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, and collaborative learning required in any college major (AACU, 2010). As a result of these conversations, the incongruence between college faculty expectations and high school students' academic preparedness and attitude toward learning in a college environment appeared as a critical barrier to a successful transition from high school to college.

Moving Forward: Impact on Future Practices of College Faculty

College faculty agreed on the need to better clarify deadline policies. High school students bring the idea that deadlines are always flexible. It appears that high school administrators should play a supporting role embracing high-school instructors who want to reinforce deadline policies. College faculty recommended using weekly updates regarding class pace and expectations, concept maps, and weekly syllabus reminders to keep the class pace as expected. Appendix B shows interventions in a psychology class intended for first-year college students after the instructor's participation in this seminar. The instructor now takes into consideration the need to introduce entering freshman to the college culture. She stresses the nature of deadlines being inflexible for many college faculty and how she feels that it is important to learn to meet deadlines, so she accepts late work but with penalties. Additionally, she now presents the syllabi in smaller chunks rather than presenting the entire course calendar, which can be overwhelming to a new student. An additional change she has made is reminding students of due dates and upcoming deadlines rather than relying on students to keep track of the deadlines themselves. She has noticed a lot of students do not even put due dates in any type of calendar, even their phones. These changes should help students adjust to the increasingly demanding requirements of college courses.

Overall, the question regarding the extent to which college professors have to motivate students at all times requires further exploration. The resultant intervention in a psychology class after this seminar was one of many other ones reported by participants. Indeed, the high school teachers were invited one year later to a one-day seminar at the college to share how their work was impacted by the initial seminar. Several college faculty members started reporting even before the initial seminar concluded that they were revisiting their deadline

policies and other classroom management strategies to better support the first-year college students. It was a learning moment for all participants as we acknowledged the importance of clarifying expectations at the beginning of the course and verifying that students understood the message clearly. Specifically, several college faculty participants immediately incorporated a weekly discussion of the syllabus pace and content. Overall, participants recognized common classroom management challenges regardless of discipline and the need to have a systematic dialogue sharing effective classroom practices. Although higher education faculty, staff, and administrators recognize the importance of engaging and motivating students (Kuh, 2007), faculty feel they must find a balance between engaging in such motivation and insisting that their students are more self-directed and self-empowered in their college education.

The high school teachers agreed to develop strategies to allow students to create their own assignments and emphasize college expectations regarding classroom behavior and assignment mechanics. It means that more college-like assignments must be implemented at the high school level and that firmer adherence to deadlines must be a priority.

Collective Message

All participants agreed on the need to increase the use of conceptual maps in the class (developing it in the class with students), and weekly syllabus reminders to keep the class pace. This will humanize the sometimes overwhelming college syllabus. Students also have to be exposed to academic environments that foster their capacity to take risks and develop their capability to act as free thinkers.

Pre-College Intervention

One means of addressing the lack of preparedness of college freshmen students with regards to classroom behavior, deadlines, note-taking, and understanding a syllabus would be creating some forms of pre-college intervention with the local high schools. Specifically, this would involve a visit to the high schools by a college professor who would address the seniors regarding college expectations. Ideally, the visiting college professor would discuss with the high school teachers beforehand the high school's policies regarding classroom behavior, deadlines, etc., and then point out to the students what they should expect when they get to college that is different from their experiences. Handing out a sample syllabus and going over the requirements for behavior and deadlines, as well as explaining the grading scheme and the various components that make up the students' final grade, could also be a good way to acclimate students to college. Of course, these individual interventions would be

immeasurably improved if there were some formal relationship between local high schools and the college, wherein best practices for these interventions could be recorded, refined, and shared with an ever-increasing number of professors who could do such work in the most efficient and far-reaching manner possible.

National Convening and Beyond

The question of how skills-based success, specifically under the CCSS, could be secured was posed to representatives from ten states at a national convening. The solution was posited as including the following: a) direct PreK-12 involvement with higher education; b) direct higher education involvement with PreK-12 curriculum; c) ongoing conversations; and d) the inclusion of arts and sciences faculty in mutual PreK-12/higher education involvement (J. DiSanto, personal communication, September 23-24, 2014). This discussion took place exactly one year *after* the high school teachers and college faculty began their conversation in the Bronx.

As the new normal in education must maintain widespread involvement across the academic stakeholders, and as states begin revising the standards and their application to provide more effective instruction, partnered conversations such as those discussed in this article will add additional support to faculty as they strive to bridge the gap between high school accomplishment and college expectations.

Although this collaboration took place before the convening and was born from mutual interest within the local community to strengthen the ability of high school graduates to succeed in college-level courses leading to an associate's degree, its existence was serendipitous as it provided the groundwork for addressing CCSS at the college. Over the past two years, at least 20 college instructors have attended a workshop on incorporating CCSS into lesson planning in courses across the content areas. Discussions included using the language of the standards in directions for assignments, beginning each session with a short writing assignment, and including benchmarks in rubrics that address specific language arts skills.

The intent behind these workshops is that incoming freshmen, who have worked under the CCSS while in high school, will be more comfortable with the language and objectives in their collegiate coursework and, therefore, be better able to meet post-secondary academic expectations. As part of a separate grant received by faculty in the Early Childhood Teacher Education program, the directions, rubrics, and materials were revised to incorporate specific Language Arts/Literacy standards.

Final Thoughts

The majority of seminar members reported having a better understanding of high school expectations regarding graduating students. Both high school and college groups overwhelmingly support the need for continuing this type of dialogue. Seminar participants showed great willingness to implement as many of the above-discussed ideas in their curriculum as their syllabi and lesson plans allow. No attendee had prior experience participating in an exchange about high school and college culture. This seminar made all of us cognizant of how strongly dialogue and understanding are needed among high school and college cultures. Members of both cohorts are eager to investigate other challenges and opportunities. Future professional-development initiatives for high school and college instructors should consider the dynamic changes of both systems and how these constantly affect first-year college students. Their transition to higher education settings is a critical step in their success.

References

- Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2007). *College learning for the new global century*. Washington, DC: National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise.
- Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2010). *Five high-impact practices. Research on learning outcomes, completion, and quality*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Argaugh, J. B. (2001). How instructor immediacy behaviors affect student satisfaction and learning in web-based courses. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 64(4), 42-54.
- Baker, P. (2011). Three configurations of school-university partnerships: An exploratory study. *Planning and Changing*, 42(1/2), 41-62.
- Jenkins, D. (2011). *Redesigning community college for completion: Lessons from research on high-performance organizations (Working Paper No. 24)*. Retrieved from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/high-performance-organizations.html?UID=844>
- Jensen, U. (2011). *Factors influencing student retention in higher education*. Summary from Pacific Policy Research Center: *Influential factors in degree attainment and persistence to career or further education for at-risk/high educational needs students*. Honolulu, HI: Kamehameha Schools-Research & Evaluation Division.

- Kuh, G. D. (2007). What student engagement data tell us about college readiness. *Peer Review*, 9(1), 4-8.
- Mathis, W. J. (2010). *The "Common Core" Standards Initiative: An effective reform tool?* Boulder, CO: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit. Retrieved from <http://epicpolicy.org/publication/common-core-standards>
- Mortiboys, A. (2012). *Teaching with emotional intelligence* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor and Francis.
- Nunez Rodriguez N., Brennan, S., Varelas, A., & Hutchins, C., & DiSanto, J. M. (2015). Center for Teaching and Learning on tour: Sharing, reflecting on and documenting effective strategies. *Journal on Centers for Teaching and Learning*, 7, 4-23.
- Nunez Rodriguez, N. (2013). Reconciling learning and teaching styles in science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines through cogenerative dialogues. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century PEC*, 52(52), 105-114.
- Office of Institutional Research Hostos Community College. (2014). *Fall 2014 student cohort profile [data file]*. Retrieved from <http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/Hostos/media/Office-of-Academic-Affairs/StudentProfile.pdf>
- Raupers, P. M. (2003). Perceptual strengths of adults. In R. Dunn & S. A. Griggs (Eds.), *Synthesis of the Dunn and Dunn Model: Who, what, when, where, and so what?* (pp. 23-26). Jamaica, NY: St. John's University Center for the Study of Learning and Teaching Styles.
- Roberts, A. V. (2003). Perceptual strengths of K-12 students. In R. Dunn & S. A. Griggs (Eds.), *Synthesis of the Dunn and Dunn Model: Who, what, when, where, and so what?* (pp. 27-29). Jamaica, NY: St. John's University Center for the Study of Learning and Teaching Styles.
- Roderick, M., Nagaoka, J., & Coca, V. (2009). College readiness for all: The challenge for urban high schools. *The Future of Children*, 19(1), 185-210.
- Tierney, W. (2004). Power, identity, and the dilemma of college student departure. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 213-234). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Tinto, V. (1999). Taking retention seriously: Rethinking the first year of college. *National Academic Advising Association Journal*, 19(2), 5-9.
- Varelas, A., Wolfe, K., & Ialongo, E. (2015). Building a better student: Developing critical thinking and writing in the community college from freshman semester to graduation. *The Community College Enterprise*, 21(2), 76-92.
-
- NELSON NUNEZ RODRIGUEZ is Professor of Chemistry and Unit Coordinator at Natural Sciences Department, Hostos Community College, CUNY. He served as Director of Center for Teaching and Learning in this institution for four years. His scholarship work focuses on Science student engagement and motivation.
- JACQUELINE M. DISANTO is assistant professor and unit coordinator for the Teacher-Education program at Hostos Community College. She served on the Center for Teaching and Learning Advisory Board for four years and is the chair of the Peer Observation Improvement Network in Teaching committee. Her areas of expertise include collegial collaboration, pedagogy, and online instruction.
- ANTONIOS VARELAS is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Hostos Community College, CUNY. He teaches general and developmental psychology courses and research methods. His research is in the area of Learning Processes, and is currently studying concept formation in the classroom.
- SARAH BRENNAN is the former assistant director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Hostos Community College and now serves as Executive Associate to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. She also is the Faculty Activity Director for the newly awarded Title V grant. Ms. Brennan has more than a decade of experience working collaboratively with faculty.
- KATE WOLFE is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Hostos Community College, CUNY. She teaches introductory and advanced Psychology courses. Her research interests focus on gender, ethnic and sexual identities and how these identities affect our perceptions of and interactions with others.
- ERNEST IALONGO is an Associate Professor of History at Hostos Community College, CUNY. He teaches Modern History and American History. His research interests focus on Modern Italian History and the intersection of culture and politics. He is also the Co-Director of the Hostos Honors Program.

Acknowledgements

Authors acknowledge the financial support from Graduate NYC! College Readiness and Success Project.

Appendix A

Evaluation Tool: Post-Project Survey for Participants

The College or High School I am from is:

I have a better understanding of the expectations that high school instructors have of graduating seniors.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

I have a better understanding of the State Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

There is value in cross-institutional conversations that explore teaching practices at the high school and college levels.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

To what degree is there flexibility to change curriculum based on the ideas generated by this collaboration?

A great deal of flexibility Some flexibility Neutral Little flexibility No flexibility

To what degree would you be willing to change your teaching practices based on the ideas generated by this collaborations?

Very willing Willing Neutral Somewhat willing Not willing

I have, prior to this project, participated in cross-institutional conversations that explored teaching practices at the high school and college levels.

True False

Why did you agree to participate in this project? What do you see as the most important outcome of this project?

Did the project meet your expectations? Please explain

Would you like to participate in similar collaborations in the future?

Any final thoughts that can help to further develop future and similar initiatives?

Appendix B

Psychology 101 Syllabus Fall 2014: Class Intervention

Interventions at Classroom Management Level

- Improve communication regarding observing assignment deadlines, attendance, punctuality, class work, and class participation;
- Improve guidelines regarding student engagement linked to online assignments (critical for the below hybrid course syllabus);
- Improve explanation regarding class etiquette, cheating.
- Based on conversation with high school teachers, a detailed explanation of the syllabus the first day of classes and handing a copy of it do not seem enough. Weekly reminder in class or in blackboard works better.

College Work Preparedness

- To improve communication regarding assignment expectations. It means find ways to clarify if students really understood assignment mechanics and expectations;
- To improve communication regarding assigned readings and text comprehension;
- To refine assignment mechanics in order to harmonize course level expectation with student preparation. Either a common assignment or common rubrics might be explored to align all course sections.