DATE: November 15, 2011

TO: Pathways Task Force

FROM: President Regina Peruggi

SUBJECT: Response from Kingsborough Community College to CUNY Pathways Proposal

In response to the request of the Pathways Task Force for feedback from the CUNY campuses regarding the draft of a Common Core curriculum, Kingsborough Community College is submitting the observations and recommendations that follow. Kingsborough elicited a broad range of opinion through the following:

- The KCC Faculty Committee on General Education, which recently formulated a revision of Kingsborough’s general education requirements that was adopted by the college’s governing board (College Council), reviewed the draft Common Core and issued its consensus view.
- After circulating the draft Common Core to the entire college community through email, I convened a special meeting of the KCC College Council on Thursday, November 10, to discuss the proposal in general and the General Education Committee’s response.

KCC General Education Committee Review

The KCC Faculty Committee on General Education includes representation from every academic department, members of the College Council, and members of the KCC delegation to the University Faculty Senate. In addition, Professor Michael Barnhart, who is a member of the Pathways Task Force, attended the meeting to discuss the Common Core. The General Education Committee’s conclusions consist of the following five major points:

1. The 15-credit flexible core recommended for all associate in arts (AA) and associate in science (AS) curricula, prescribes a balance of disciplines and basic skills. The flexible structure allows each college the opportunity to continue offering existing courses that are popular with students as well as appropriate for a broad foundation in the liberal arts and sciences.

2. Several A.S. curricula will need to add 3-6 credits to their current General Education requirements in order to satisfy the proposed 30-credit common core. With the
exception of a small number of them, the majority can use available elective credits or make other relatively minor adjustments in the major.

3. The KCC associate in applied science (A.A.S.) degree curricula will need to increase from a 6-credit to the 7-credit English and from a 3-credit to the 4-credit mathematics requirement. This addition in liberal arts and sciences credits will override State Education regulations, which do not require more than the minimum twenty credits in liberal arts subject matter for this degree type.

Recently, KCC added college mathematics and a laboratory science requirement to all degrees, including AAS career programs. To accommodate the additional credits, Freshman English I (ENG 01200) was reduced to three credits from four. Several AAS career programs opted to require a three-credit mathematics course, either College Algebra (MAT 00900) or Statistics (MAT 02000). The Pathways initiative, as conceived in the Task Force draft, will cause these AAS curricula to take credit(s) either from the major or perhaps one less course from the flexible core from which AAS degrees are exempt.

4. In order for language study to satisfy the flexible core, existing KCC Language I and II courses must be reduced to three credits from four. The College must address either the loss of a semester hour of instruction in language study or the additional cost of providing four semester hours of instruction for three credits.

5. The Committee has concluded that the 30-credit common core, as designed, should benefit CUNY students as they transfer from one institution to another, particularly those who transfer from associate to baccalaureate institutions. Given the significant percentage of CUNY baccalaureate graduates who began their studies at a CUNY community college, Kingsborough faculty will take up the work necessary to accommodate the 30-credit common core for all degrees.

KCC College Council (Governance Body) Review

Vice President and Provost Stuart Suss presided at the special meeting of the College Council attended by 32 representatives. He informed the group that the meeting was intended as part of a consultative process for the CUNY Pathways project and that the council’s input was welcome. A review of the General Education Committee’s conclusions about the Common Core was provided.

Although there was general agreement with the input provided by the General Education Committee, there were several other issues raised from the floor. Because no extensive discussion followed on any of the additional opinions and because no votes were taken, it is not possible to determine that the opinions expressed were widely held. In the interest of providing a complete report, however, I will note the following:
• The chairperson of our Mathematics Department observed that the CUNY Mathematics Discipline Council recommended that the area in the Common Core entitled “Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning” be re-titled “Mathematical Reasoning.”
• It was also mentioned that the CUNY Computer Science Discipline Council has recommended that the Common Core be augmented to include a required course “where students deal meaningfully with technology itself….”
• The chairperson of the KCC Foreign Languages Department reported that the CUNY Foreign Languages Discipline Council proposed that a foreign language requirement be added to the required Common Core credits, raising its total from 15 to 18 credits.

Other comments made at the College Council meeting tended to focus on process rather than on the specific aspects of the proposed Common Core. While, for the most part, it was determined that process questions were beyond the scope of this particular discussion, it was noted that Kingsborough was very well represented in the development of a university-wide Common Core. Not only has Professor Barnhart served as a member of the Task Force but the college also has representatives on various discipline councils that will review which courses will satisfy the core requirements.

In conclusion, it is apparent that a large majority of Kingsborough faculty endorse a university-wide Common Core. The proposed structure accomplishes the goal of ensuring a firm basis in foundational courses and providing broad curricular exposure, while at the same time giving sufficient flexibility to the individual colleges. In addition, because nearly 80% of Kingsborough graduates transfer to a baccalaureate college – most to a CUNY four-year institution – it is incumbent upon our university to make the transfer process as efficient as possible. A clear pathway is long overdue.