TO:         CUNY Pathways Task Force
FROM:      Dr. Diane B. Call, President
SUBJECT:   Campus Response to Pathways Framework and Learning Outcomes
DATE:      November 15, 2011

In response to the request from the CUNY task force, here is Queensborough Community College’s response to the Pathways framework and learning outcomes distributed for comment on October 31, 2011.

The Queensborough campus has been involved in a number of consultations and discussions (a comprehensive list is provided at the end of this memo) in which various concerns and reservations have been expressed. Probably the fundamental concern of the institution is to ensure that one of its core values—“[p]roviding a rich general education core aimed at enhancing students’ critical thinking and decision making skills” (from the Mission)—is preserved in whatever form the Pathways framework takes.

To this end, in a close examination of the learning outcomes proposed, we have determined that they align very well with the general education objectives and learning outcomes of the college. It is, in fact, the case that the Pathways framework omits two important learning outcomes that the college values, one for technology use and one for collaborative work, and the recommendations below have addressed these omissions. This core value has led to some refinements to the learning outcomes both in the required and in the flexible core.

In addition, to ensure that the framework fosters “a collaborative, learning-centered community . . . dedicated to academic excellence and to the development of the whole individual in an environment that promotes intellectual inquiry, global awareness, and life-long active learning” (from the Mission), it is proposed that the mandatory learning outcomes in the flexible core be modified to ensure that a broader array of disciplines will meet the flexible core requirements, including an area like foreign languages, which figures prominently in many of the curricula at the college.

Finally, it is the college’s sincere hope that, when the final version of the Pathways framework is released, that CUNY make a definitive statement about the relation between the common core established and the associate degree programs at the campuses, one that provides clear incentive to ensure that students complete their degree programs before transfer to baccalaureate institutions.

In response to the specific request of the CUNY task force, Queensborough offers the following recommendations to the task force for its consideration. Recommendations have been organized according to several categories. To save space, learning outcomes are referred to by roman numeral and letter as they appear in the draft framework distributed.
Alternative structures or category titles

Four modifications are recommended:

- Under I.A, change “English Composition” to “English Composition and Communication.” This allows greater flexibility for the inclusion of speech communication in the required common core, should this become a direction the college wants to take, and coincides with a minor modification to two of the learning objectives in this group (see below).
- Under II, for the three mandated learning outcomes, make the following changes: 1) delete the second bulleted item and 2) revise the third bulleted item, as follows: “Using evidence appropriately to support conclusions, produce written or oral arguments or presentations commensurate with level of learning objectives.” These changes make the mandatory learning outcomes accessible and applicable to a broader range of disciplines, particularly foreign languages.
- Change the description for the flexible core, under II, to read: “five 3-credit liberal arts courses, with at least one course from each of the four areas and the possibility of two courses in one discipline.” This change offers an opportunity for individual colleges to build in a course sequence in one area where the institution wishes to place emphasis.
- Under II.C, change the category title from “Creative Expression” to “Aesthetics and Communication,” as this is more appropriate to an area that is part of liberal arts rather than performance, which “Creative Expression” seems to imply.

Omissions in learning outcomes

Three additions are recommended to account for the omission of “technology competency” and “collaborative work” and for clearer inclusion of speech communication in the flexible core. Technology competency is, in many cases, a significant component through computers and graphic calculators in the solution of mathematical problems. Collaborative work is generally recognized as an important component of the undergraduate experience.

- Under I.B, the following learning outcomes have been modified to include technology competency:
  - Interpret and draw appropriate inferences from mathematical models, such as formulas, graphs, tables, and technology-aided models.
  - Use algebraic, numerical, graphical, statistical or technology-assisted methods to draw accurate inferences and solve mathematical problems commensurate with level of learning objectives.
  - Effectively communicate quantitative analysis or solutions to mathematical problems in written, oral, or visual form.
- Add as a second bullet the following learning outcome to II. C and D: “Work collaboratively in diverse groups to accomplish learning tasks.”
• Add the following learning outcome to II.C to allow for speech communication: “Speak clearly, accurately, and coherently in several modes of delivery.”

**Modifications to learning outcomes**

In the modifications recommended below, the specific learning outcome is referenced, deletions are indicated by strikethroughs, and additions are underlined. The changes are meant to improve the overall precision of the statements or to make clearer the inclusiveness of certain disciplines (i.e., foreign languages and speech communication).

• Under I.A – Produce coherent texts (such as formal essays, research papers, and reports, and speeches) using appropriate technology, critique one’s own and others’ texts, and improve them using standard English, grammar, mechanics, and clear prose.
• Under I.A – Support a thesis with a well-reasoned oral or written argument and communicate persuasively across a variety of contexts, purposes, audiences, and media, using appropriate rhetorical modes and technology.
• Under I.C – Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and research methods of a scientific discipline.
• Under I.C - Apply scientific research ethics and unbiased assessment in the reporting of scientific data.
• Under II.A. – Identify apply the fundamental concepts and research methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring world cultures, past and present, including, but not limited to, anthropology, economics, foreign languages (nonduplicative of previous language acquisition) (with placement at level commensurate with student language competency), history, political science, and world literature.
• Under II.A – Identify and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, or belief plays in cultural systems.
• Under II.A. – Speak, read, and write in a language other than English and use the language conceptual skills to appreciate and respond to cultures other than one’s own.
• Under II.B – Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and research methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the U.S. experience in its diversity, including, but not limited to, anthropology, economics, history, political science, sociology, and U.S. literature.
• Under II.C. – Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and research methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring creative expression aesthetics and communication, including, but not limited to, communications, creative writing, and the visual and performing media the arts, music, and theater.
• Under II.C. – Speak clearly, accurately, and coherently in several modes of delivery.
• Under II.D – Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and research methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the relationship between the individual and society, including, but not limited to, anthropology, computer science, philosophy, psychology, religion, and sociology.
For a complete accounting of all these changes, please see the accompanying appendix, which has the entire Pathways framework and the recommended changes, each in its place.

The recommendations above are the result of consultations with a broad constituency and from a number of forums for discussion at the college, specifically:

- Multiple broadcast emails to all faculty, CLTs, adjuncts, HEOs, Student Government Association/students of all CUNY announcements as well as the Steering Committee proposal
- Several discussions at executive meetings of the Faculty Executive Committee and Steering Committee of the Academic Senate
- Discussion with the senior administration on September 20
- Discussion with Student Government Association on September 22
- Discussions at the College Advisory Planning Committee on September 27
- Pathways student Q and A sheet sent to all students via Tiger Mail
- Updates at each of the monthly Academic Senate meetings in writing and presented orally by the chair and president and representatives on Pathways committees and Special Committee of the Academic Senate on General Education
- Updates at meetings of the College Personnel and Budget Committee
- OAA discussion with department chairs on November 1
- Meetings of the Special Committee on General Education of the Academic Senate
- Fall Faculty Meeting on October 26 with panel of college’s representatives on Steering Committee and Working Group
- Campus Conversation on November 9 for all faculty, CLTs, HEOs (campus-wide notice sent twice): over 50 attended
- Conference of the College on the Pathways project on November 11 (featured speaker Dean Michelle Anderson): remarks and Q and A; over 100 attended