Welcome to our first issue of 2012. We have so much to share with you. Let’s begin!

—Erika Dreifus, OAA Director of Communications

A Message on the Pathways Initiative from the Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost

Early last month, the CUNY Pathways Task Force submitted its recommendations to Chancellor Goldstein regarding the 30-credit Common Core structure, part of an overall 42-credit General Education framework that was called for by the Board of Trustees resolution of June 27, 2011. On December 12, the Chancellor announced that he had accepted the Task Force’s recommendations. (Online: http://bit.ly/sNVOIw.)

These historic events compel reflection on the factors that produced them. According to New York State Education Law, CUNY is one university. But the curricula of CUNY’s colleges have not been well aligned. Colleges have accepted transfer credits inconsistently. In some cases, students who transferred within CUNY with an AA or AS degree received credit for the exact same course that a student who was one course short of an AA or AS did not. Moreover, colleges differed in the number of credits they required for general education and in the ways in which credits were allotted across disciplinary areas.

All of these differences have posed obstacles for CUNY students, especially for our many transfer students, and most CUNY senior college graduates are transfer students. These obstacles have complicated students’ efforts to graduate within the number of credits specified for their degrees, sometimes with dire financial aid implications. As an integrated University, CUNY should allow students to move freely within the system according to their needs and interests, although subject to each college’s admissions standards.

Available in full online (http://bit.ly/vO1SWM), the Common Core framework recommended by the task force and accepted by the Chancellor reflects months of research, analysis, and intense discussion. As the Chancellor has noted, the structure is remarkable for its academic rigor and integrity, clarity of organization, and consistency with national norms for general education. It focuses on the first 30 credits of general education at CUNY with the overarching intents of developing a broad range of knowledge and skills, and of building a solid intellectual foundation upon which students can engage in successively more sophisticated study and analysis as they progress toward their degrees.

The Common Core structure comprises two parts. The 12-credit “Required Core” consists of requirements in English Composition (six credits), Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning (three credits), and Life and Physical Sciences (three credits). A variant permits colleges to offer four-credit courses to satisfy the math or science areas, subject to certain provisions.

The second component of the 30-credit structure, the 18-credit “Flexible Core,” requires

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A Message from EVC Logue (continued)

students to complete six three-credit liberal arts and sciences courses, with at least one course selected from five areas and no more than two courses in any discipline or interdisciplinary field. The five areas are: World Cultures and Global Issues, U.S. Experience in its Diversity, Creative Expression, Individual and Society, and Scientific World.

All Common Core courses must satisfy a detailed list of rigorous learning outcomes. This will ensure that the Common Core has accountability—CUNY can assess the effectiveness of the Common Core against student achievement of the learning outcomes. This approach will also provide the campuses considerable flexibility in terms of what courses they can offer as part of the Common Core. As long as courses satisfy the specified learning outcomes, they can be part of the Common Core. Further, if they wish, campuses can limit the courses in an area of the Common Core to ensure that students take that type of course (e.g., courses in the World Cultures and Global Issues could be restricted to courses that teach a language other than English).

Crucially, the Task Force’s final recommendations reflected constructive, specific recommendations from the campuses on an earlier draft. Michelle J. Anderson, Dean of the CUNY School of Law and Task Force Chair, has detailed these changes in a letter (http://bit.ly/uP4qB2).

As Chancellor Goldstein said when he accepted the Task Force’s recommendations, “the implementation of the new common core must be undertaken with the same diligence and care” that characterized its design. Thus, the University is establishing two new committees, each with specific responsibilities. First, under the guidance of Senior University Dean Robert Ptachik, an Implementation Advisory Committee will ensure that the campuses and the Central Office work in tandem to enact changes smoothly. In addition, a Course Review Committee, which was called for in the original resolution, will evaluate campus-submitted courses for their inclusion in the common core. This committee will comprise faculty from many different disciplines and all campuses. Nominations have been solicited. Updates will be posted as soon as possible at www.cuny.edu/pathways, which is the nexus for all information about Pathways.

The June Board resolution also required each college to submit for the Chancellor’s approval a plan for implementing the General Education Framework, which comprises the Common Core plus the baccalaureate-granting colleges’ 12 College-Option general education credits. Initial guidance on developing these plans has been provided. Colleges have been invited to apply for funding to assist with specific elements of these plans. Plans and applications are due on April 1.

Meanwhile, work is under way to meet another requirement specified within the June resolution. Under the leadership of Graduate Center President William Kelly, faculty committees are establishing the first three to six courses that lead into the largest transfer majors at CUNY. The board’s resolution specifies that recommendations for these courses are to be made by May 1, 2012, to the Office of Academic Affairs. Committees are currently focusing on majors in biology, business, criminal justice, English, nursing, psychology, and teacher education.

Perhaps most exciting is the extent to which all of this work has engaged—and will continue to engage—faculty from every CUNY college and so many disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas. The time, attention, and talents that these faculty have dedicated to fulfilling the intellectual promise and potential of the Pathways project—setting high standards for learning outcomes in general-education work, collaborating to define entry-level requirements for the largest transfer majors, and applying their own sophisticated creative and critical-thinking skills to best resolve complex curricular questions—has been nothing short of inspirational. As implementation progresses, we can take confidence in these extraordinary abilities and motivation and anticipate being able to provide a high-quality, seamless educational experience to all of our students, on all of our campuses. Then, truly, shall the mission of this University—providing access to high-quality education for all students—be fulfilled.

NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS APPROVED

At its meeting of November 28, 2011, CUNY’s Board of Trustees approved the following new academic programs:

AS/BS in Chemistry/Pharmaceutical Sciences
(Queensborough Community College and York College)

AA in Communication Studies
(Borough of Manhattan Community College)

These programs now await registration with the New York State Education Department.
MaRLI Multiplies Scholarly Research Possibilities

A new initiative launched by the New York Public Library, Columbia University, and New York University allows CUNY faculty and graduate students to apply for borrowing privileges from those research libraries through June 2012. Dubbed the Manhattan Research Library Initiative (MaRLI), the program provides access to participating collections at all three institutions. Among the benefits available to CUNY faculty and graduate students are on-site access comparable to members of the host institution; on-site access to electronic resources; borrowing privileges for circulating on- and offsite print items; renewal and recall procedures and fines parallel to comparable members of the host institution; and appropriate reference services. For detailed information on eligibility and registration, access and borrowing privileges, and participating lenders, please visit the online guide available at libguides.gc.cuny.edu/MaRLI.

UNIVERSITY DEAN FOR HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES ISSUES REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Office of the University Dean for Health and Human Services provides support and technical assistance to CUNY schools that offer degree and certificate programs in health and human services disciplines, including nursing and allied health fields. Currently, this office invites applications for funding in several priority areas, all of which are described in the Request for Proposals (www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/hhs/HHS.RFP.FY12.doc).

Most allocations will be between $10,000 and $20,000; the maximum is $30,000. All funds must be spent by June 30, 2012.

Completed applications must be submitted by Friday, February 3, 2012. Successful applicants will be notified by February 24, 2012. Questions about the application process may be directed to Shana Lassiter (Shana.Lassiter@mail.cuny.edu)

OAA RESOURCE SHARES BEST TEACHING PRACTICES

Executive Vice Chancellor Alexandra W. Logue has announced the publication of “Best Teaching Practices,” a resource guide developed by University Dean of Education Joan Lucariello and Postdoctoral Fellow Mari Watanabe-Rose. The guide is available in a print booklet form and online at www.cuny.edu/teachingpractices.

This guide is intended to share findings from research on evidence-based best teaching practices. The practices shared are general, rather than discipline-based, and therefore hold relevance for CUNY faculty in all disciplines. The guide divides the material into three groups: practices regarding presentation of materials; practices regarding student assignments and testing; and strategies that students can use to enhance learning.

Many CUNY faculty have already received copies of the booklet this past fall at meetings and events. Copies have been distributed to the Chief Academic Officers and campus Centers for Teaching and Learning as well.

According to Dean Lucariello, revisions will be made over time. Readers may direct comments to Dean Lucariello (Joan.Lucariello@mail.cuny.edu), who also welcomes any other ideas faculty may have to enhance instruction at the University. “We are also happy to come to the campuses and visit with faculty to discuss best teaching practices with them,” says Dean Lucariello.

Editorial Tips and Tricks

Q. Is a curriculum vitae abbreviated as “C.V.” or “CV”…..?
A. Webster’s preference is CV.

Q. Which of the following is preferred: honors student or honor student?
A. She’s an honor student. She graduated with honors.

Q. Which is correct: eLearning, e-Learning, e-learning, [or] elearning?
A. It’s e-learning.
CUNY Academic Commons Receives Sloan Grant

Since its official debut two years ago, CUNY’s Academic Commons (commons.gc.cuny.edu) has grown to include more than 2,500 individual members, 300 groups, and 500 blogs—not to mention scores of collaborative wiki pages. In October, the Sloan Foundation awarded the Academic Commons team a $107,500 grant to develop “Commons In A Box,” a user-friendly, customizable version of CUNY’s platform that will be distributed publicly. The award reflects what Academic Commons has already accomplished—the creation of an online medium for open scholarly exchange—and will enable the team to continue to improve the system.

Founded as an Academic Technology initiative within the Office of Academic Affairs, the Academic Commons aims to provide a flexible social network to connect CUNY faculty, staff, graduate students, alumni, and postdoctoral fellows. Key to its appeal: its status as a user-driven and modifiable open-source system; its innovative features have already attracted attention.

Plug-ins created by the Commons team have already been downloaded over 100,000 times. The team has also advised Georgetown University, Temple University, the University of British Columbia, and the New York City Mayor’s Office, among many others. Project Director Dr. Matthew Gold, Assistant Professor of English at City Tech and member of the Graduate Center doctoral faculty in the Interactive Technology and Pedagogy Certificate Program, explains that distributing code and giving back to the academic community is in keeping with CUNY’s mission of public education.

Support from the Sloan Foundation will allow Academic Commons, under the direction of Gold and Commons’ Lead Developer Boone Gorges, to expand its efforts at information sharing. An early focus of the grant project will be the development of a Commons prototype for the Modern Language Association (MLA) and its over 30,000 members. The alpha and beta versions of “MLA Commons” will be available in early summer and late summer, respectively. In November 2012, CUNY’s Commons team hopes to release the “Commons In A Box” code publicly, and anticipates it will be used by colleges and universities, academic organizations, and non-profit.

In recent years, modes of scholarly communication have changed as academics have moved online. As Gold notes, developing CUNY Academic Commons—and transforming it into “Commons In A Box”—is just another example of “CUNY being out in front of the curve.”

Office of Academic Affairs Transitions: Names to Note

The Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) begins 2012 with some transitions on the Academic Council. First, Kingsborough Community College Associate Provost Reza Fakhari is representing the college while Provost Stuart Suss steps up as Interim President during President Regina Peruggi’s leave. Next, Dr. Gary Schwartz, Macaulay Honors College Director at Lehman College, will represent Macaulay; he succeeds Dr. Tim Caron, formerly Associate Dean at Macaulay, who has returned to California. In February, Professor Joseph Rachlin will begin representing Lehman College when Provost Mary Papazian takes up the presidency at Southern Connecticut State University. We welcome our new colleagues; we wish the very best to Provost Papazian and Dr. Caron in their new roles; and we look forward to Provost Suss’s return in due course.

Within OAA, Dr. Cheryl Littman, formerly Assistant Dean for Institutional Research, has been named University Director of the Performance Management Process (PMP). She succeeds Dr. Sherri Ondrus, who has taken a position in Arizona. We also welcome Ms. Darline Charles as the new afternoon receptionist on the sixth floor at 535 East 80th Street.
We hope that you have enjoyed this issue of our newsletter. Please send any feedback and/or ideas for future content to erika.dreifus@mail.cuny.edu, or visit the Office of Academic Affairs electronic suggestion box at www.cuny.edu/academics

Thanks to Curtis Kendrick, Joan Lucariello, George Otte, Jordan Rome, Emily Stanback, and Mari Watanabe-Rose for their contributions.

ACRONYMS OF THE MONTH:
MIDYEAR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT EDITION

CFAO: Council of Financial Aid Officers
CoR: Council of Registrars
EMC: Enrollment Management Council
OSFA: Office of Student Financial Assistance
O UR: Office of the University Registrar
UAPC: University Application Processing Center
UCAR: University Council of Admissions and Recruitment Directors

For more information on these and other acronyms, please visit bit.ly/qTOp5w.

OUTSTANDING ONLINE RESOURCES

In every issue, Academically Speaking spotlights relevant web resources for the CUNY community. If you know of a site that you think should be featured here, please contact Erika Dreifus, OAA Director of Communications, with your suggestion.

Academic Commons
Please read about the Academic Commons on page 4 of the newsletter. Then go to and explore:
commons.gc.cuny.edu

CUNY Alert:
It’s winter! Make sure that you receive text or voice alerts of emergencies or weather related closings on your campus via mobile or home phone and email.
www.cuny.edu/news/alert.html

Pathways to Degree Completion
As Executive Vice Chancellor Logue’s message in this newsletter indicates, much is happening with the Pathways to Degree Completion initiative. Stay informed by checking in with the Pathways website:
www.cuny.edu/pathways