

INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to the inaugural issue of *In Transit: The LaGuardia Journal on Teaching and Learning*, a collective product of the teaching faculty and staff of LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York. We hope you regard this journal as a standing invitation to learn with colleagues, share your insights, and join an on-going, vibrant conversation about teaching and learning at LaGuardia.

In Transit provides LaGuardia faculty with a new opportunity to write about the exciting and demanding process of teaching and learning at LaGuardia. We invite faculty to develop articles with a scholarly focus on the classroom, sharing experiences, successes, problems, and insights. Grounded in our particular classroom contexts, we seek to raise and explore the largest and most significant questions engaging educators worldwide.

Each day, as we arrive at LaGuardia, we are reminded of the complexity and excitement that marks our community. Walking from the 33rd and Rawson stop on the number 7 train that travels between Times Square and Flushing, Queens, we join a parade of students from the most diverse community in the country, faculty who come to teach them, and staff that works to support teaching and learning. It's a privilege to be part of that parade, to feel a part of something so purposeful, even visionary.

In Transit is the journal of this community in motion. Transit, transition, and change are everywhere at LaGuardia. Our neighborhood in western Queens is filled with the rumble of the train yards; the rattle and crash of the elevated subway; the honking, surging traffic sweeping down the avenues and onto the bridges that leap the turbulent East River. LaGuardia is situated on the edge, at the nexus between Queens and Manhattan, a jumping off place, a transition between contrasting urban worlds.

Transitions shape classroom dynamics in every department and program at LaGuardia,

affecting countless aspects of student and faculty life. Our students come from across the world, crossing borders national and personal. Changing cultures and stages of life, they are figuring out what it means to be a college student, what it means to be a New Yorker, and what it means to be an American in the new global world of the 21st century. Our faculty community is changing dramatically, as our founders retire and pass on the institution they shaped to new colleagues. Veteran and new, LaGuardia faculty are learning new approaches, trying out new technologies, and developing new strategies for helping students succeed. Our college as a whole is reinventing itself every day. New leadership and new challenges are moving us into a complex new era. *In Transit* will reflect the changes taking place across LaGuardia, creating opportunities for faculty to reflect on what it means to teach and learn in this dynamic environment.

In launching this journal, we connect to a nationwide movement of faculty engaged in the scholarship of teaching and learning. In a landmark 1990 book *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Ernest L. Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation urged educational leaders to “move beyond the tired old ‘teaching versus research’ debate and give the familiar and honorable term ‘scholarship’ a broader, more capacious meaning” (16). Seeking enhanced recognition and reward for the craft of teaching, Boyer argued that excellent teaching was characterized by the same habits of mind found in other forms of scholarly work.

Boyer's words found a receptive audience, and by the beginning of the new millennium, thousands of faculty from every discipline had begun to study their own classrooms, using the tools of scholarship to better understand the processes of teaching and learning. “A scholarship of teaching,” as Pat Hutchings and Lee Schulman have written, “requires a kind of ‘going meta,’ in which faculty frame and sys-

tematically investigate questions related to student learning – the conditions under which it occurs, what it looks like, how to deepen it ... with an eye not only to improving their own classrooms, but to advancing practice beyond it” (148).

The scholarship of teaching does not in any way replace traditional approaches to scholarship; rather, it complements and enriches them. “While much of the research we do is still traditional,” concludes the recently-released *Research and Scholarship in the Two Year College*, a report from the National Council of Teachers of English, “we believe that the scholarship of teaching should be valued equally...”

The study of teaching has come to be valued as a scholarly subject, not only in the two-year college, but in many four-year institutions as well. This type of inquiry does not reflect a difference in rigor or importance, but one in kind or emphasis.... By widening the view of research and scholarship, we believe that we can have an important impact on our field (10).

For LaGuardia faculty, the scholarship of teaching and learning offers new options and opportunities. Studying our own practice – and the dynamics of student learning – can extend and deepen LaGuardia’s tradition of innovation. Focusing intellectual energy on writing and publishing about our classrooms will not only help us advance our individual and collective practice; it will also bring new recognition and engage LaGuardia with some of the most exciting work taking place in higher education nationwide. *In Transit* is an important vehicle for strengthening this connection.

While we are ambitious in starting this journal, hoping to eventually invite writings by faculty outside LaGuardia, our first issue manifests our intent to “grow” a journal and cultivate writers within our home base. Our Call for Papers invited LaGuardia faculty to address a selection of “hot topics” that shape many classrooms and faculty seminars: learning commu-

nities, diversity, writing and literacy-building in the disciplines, and the integration of interactive pedagogy with digital technologies. We asked new faculty to write about those topics in relation to the experience they were bringing to LaGuardia and the ways that experience shaped their initial semesters in our classrooms. We asked senior faculty to write about the changes they have witnessed in relation to those topics and their individual development as faculty members. Hoping to cultivate writing about the scholarship of teaching and learning among faculty who had not previously published in this field, we followed the Call for Papers with a series of writing workshops that gave faculty opportunities to develop ideas for articles together and to provide feedback to each other at different stages of the writing process. So many exciting articles emerged from this process that we had to rethink our process and plan for a second issue, to be published later this year.

This first issue of *In Transit* includes writings by seasoned writers and those who are bravely taking the plunge and publishing about teaching and learning for the first time. We see ways that many of these essays may be further extended and reworked, perhaps leading to publication in well-established national journals. Those articles will change, of course, just as our journal as a whole will change. In that sense, this issue of *In Transit* represents a key first step in the development of a vibrant, multi-layered connection between LaGuardia and the national conversation about scholarship of teaching and learning.

In Transit offers many faculty voices responding to the movement and change that characterize LaGuardia. There is no one, neatly-defined pedagogical theory or perspective on teaching and learning represented here. Rather, there are many perspectives, the voices of real teachers reflecting on their work with real students. These articles are grounded in the everyday reality of LaGuardia and the discussions that take place when teachers find rare moments to talk and think together. In our classrooms, hallways, and seminars, we learn

a great deal from each other; and when we pack up our books and papers at day's end and walk back to the subway, we sometimes think about new ways to share and deepen what we are learning. *In Transit* represents a new venue for that vital conversation and connection.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Finally, we extend our gratitude to our colleagues, whose articles teach us, inspire us, and make us proud. Thank you for all that you have done to create these articles and for the hard work that goes into being caring and thoughtful LaGuardia teachers, leaders in this meaningful experiment in educational change.

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