

Dr. Gail O. Mellow Biography



Dr. Gail O. Mellow is President of LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City, Queens. Renowned as “The World’s Community College,” LaGuardia is a recognized model of excellence for community colleges nationwide.

Part of the City University of New York (CUNY) system, LaGuardia is a two-year institution serving over 50,000 full- and part-time students from 163 different countries who speak 119 different native languages. A catalyst for development in western Queens and beyond, LaGuardia serves New Yorker’s native and immigrant communities through more than 50 majors and certificate programs, enabling career advancement and transfer to four-year colleges at twice the national average.

Since Dr. Mellow joined LaGuardia in 2000, the College was named one of the Top Three Large Community Colleges by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement in 2003, and has won numerous awards. Among them are the prestigious 2006 MetLife Foundation Community College Excellence Award for Service to Underserved Students, the 2007 Bellwether Award for Effective Pedagogy from the Community Colleges Futures Assembly and a 2004 TIAA-CREF Theodore M. Hesburgh Certificate of Excellence for the College’s innovative faculty training programs. In 2002, LaGuardia was named one of thirteen National Institutions of Excellence by the Policy Center on the First Year of College.

Dr. Mellow is a nationally recognized expert on the history, development and future of the American community college, as well as on the vital role that community colleges play in educating students for a global economy and spurring job creation. She is in demand as a speaker both here and abroad, and has shared her expertise with educators and public officials in several countries.

In May 2009, Dr. Mellow joined a Brookings Institution panel to discuss a new report entitled, “Transforming America’s Community Colleges: A Proposal to Expand Opportunity and Promote Economic Prosperity,” which argues that in order to renew America’s status as the global leader in college attainment, the federal government must transform America’s community colleges and equip them for the 21st century.

In March 2009, Dr. Mellow delivered the keynote speech “Community Colleges and a Passion for the Possible” at the League for Innovation in the Community College’s annual Innovations Conference in Tahoe, Nevada.

In December 2008, Dr. Mellow joined with the Chilean Minister of Education Monica Jimenez de la Jara and officials from the Universidad Central in Santiago, to sign an agreement that will create a pilot community college in Chile under the auspices of Universidad Central.

In the fall of 2008, Dr. Mellow was a US representative at the Council of Europe’s 50th anniversary educational conference in Strasbourg, France. Dr. Mellow joined 100 educators from around the world gathered to explore higher education’s responsibility for fostering democracy.

In February 2008 she delivered the American Council on Education’s Robert H. Atwell Lecture, the keynote address to 1,500 higher education leaders from around the nation. Dr. Mellow was the second community college president to deliver this prestigious lecture in its 90-year history.

Dr. Mellow was the keynote speaker at “Reviving the Delphic Ideal” in Delphi, Greece in 2006, and was a keynote speaker at the first-ever US-China Community College Conference in Beijing in 2004.

Dr. Mellow is the co-author of *Minding the Dream: The Process and Practice of the American Community College* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). She is also the co-author of more than thirty articles on community colleges, economic development, diversity, faculty development, job training, and pedagogical innovation. She is a consulting editor for *Change Magazine*, the national magazine for higher education.

Dr. Mellow’s efforts spearheading economic development have resulted in such achievements as the establishment of the LaGuardia Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which provides business counseling in four languages. The SBDC has packaged over \$25 million in loans, investments and grants since its inception just after September 11, 2001. It has provided service directly to over 2,300 businesses through one-on-one counseling, created or saved over 1,000 jobs and educated over 5,000 entrepreneurs through customized training and other workforce activities. Under Dr. Mellow’s leadership, over \$16 million in external funding through grants and contracts is secured each year for workforce development, initiatives that support at-risk students and initiatives to help low income individuals transition to work and to education. The College received over \$6 million to create NY Designs, a business incubator that nurtures businesses in the design industries.

Dr. Mellow is an active participant in community affairs, and serves on the boards of educational and professional associations, as well as nonprofit agencies. She currently serves on the boards of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Jobs for the Future, Excelencia in Education, the Center for an Urban Future, Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy, the Community College Research Center at Columbia University, and the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families.

Dr. Mellow was recently named as a Commissioner with The Springboard Project of the Business Roundtable, which brings together business, labor, educators and others to examine and recommend changes to improve America's workforce system.

Dr. Mellow is the former Chair of the Northeast Connecticut Economic Alliance, a nonprofit economic development agency, and has served in various capacities, including serving on the boards of the American Association for Higher Education, National Commission for Cooperative Education, National Commission on Adult Literacy, and the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience. She has also served as Chair for the American Council on Education, and as Presidential Ambassador for Phi Theta Kappa in the Southern District of NY.

Dr. Mellow received an A. A. from Jamestown Community College, a B.A. from SUNY Albany, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa, and her M.A. and Ph.D. from The George Washington University in Social Psychology.