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IS CUNY REALLY THE BEST OPTION FOR YOU?

A LOOK INTO WHY LAGUARDIA STUDENTS STAY WITHIN CUNY

BY WEILY LANG
& CARLOS GALINDO

As the school year wraps up its first month, LaGuardia students are preparing to transfer to four-year schools by the fall of 2015. Amidst the flurry of recommendation letters, SAT prep, and completion of higher level courses, students face the important decision of choosing which schools to apply to. Given the standard advice of creating a list of safety, target, and reach schools, LaGuardia students typically choose at least one CUNY college as a "safety" school. However, every semester the Honors Program sees students who are at a loss when choosing other schools to apply to outside of CUNY. Even amongst students who completed the competitive Barnard College Intercollegiate Program (an intensive Natural Sciences program for LaGuardia students), 64% of all transferring students chose to transfer to a CUNY senior college. There is such

a wide diversity of schools and programs that can mutually be a perfect fit for both the school and student but are usually passed up simply because it wasn't on their radar.

The most glaring reason that CUNY is an obvious choice for LaGuardia students is that applying anywhere else is a costly process, both financially and otherwise. One reason LaGuardia students choose to stay within CUNY is to keep their college credits intact. In 2013, CUNY implemented its Pathways Initiative to help students preserve their general education requirements when transferring between CUNY schools. A common belief is that these Pathways courses will not count towards students' majors outside of CUNY.

In reality, the CUNY Pathways Common Core areas are based on similar common core requirements at many four-year institutions, such as the University of

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ALUMNI INTERVIEW: OMRI SHAFIR

BY ALEKSANDR RUZIYEV

As the transfer process continues at LaGuardia and elsewhere, students are tasked with making huge decisions in regards to their futures. Do they stay within the comfort zone of CUNY or do they venture out into the great unknown of private institutions? In the following interview with Omri Shafir, a former HSAC leader and current student at Hunter College, we find out why he made the decision to stay within the CUNY system.



Aleks Ruziyev: *You went through the transfer process last semester. What were the key points that played a role in generating your college list?*

Omri Shafir: The key points for my transfer process were basically location and cost. I knew I wanted to stay in New York City because I'd have the highest chance of success as I continued my

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The Honors Student Advisory Committee (HSAC), the student arm of the Honors Program at LaGuardia Community College, is not a club or an honor society. It is an active, student driven collective focused on enriching LaGuardia students' college experience through the creation of a powerful peer and alumni network.

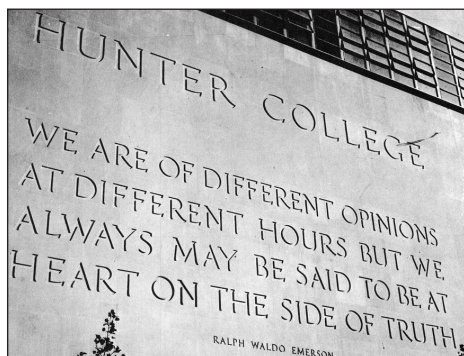
Meetings Wednesdays @ E-147

WAIT, THERE'S MORE... ➡



ALUMNI INTERVIEW WITH OMRI SHAFIR (CONTINUED)

college education by staying near my home (it's the same reason why I chose Laguardia). It was also important for me to understand my own weaknesses and needs before choosing a school. I've had issues staying in school before when I was studying out-of-state and I was just trying to increase my chances of success by following through on my desire to complete my college education.



AR: You're currently attending Hunter. What were the contributing factors that made you want to stay within the CUNY system?

OS: I knew that the CUNY system offered the best location for me (since Hunter and really almost all the CUNY schools are so close to where I live) and it was the best cost while offering many opportunities. By going to a CUNY school you are offered internship opportunities and a plethora of events from every other school within the system.

AR: What are some of the limitations of staying within the CUNY system?

OS: Most private schools offer more than a school within the CUNY system. Staying in the city and having to commute to school makes it feel like you're back in high school in a sense. You don't get the college atmosphere or sense of school spirit that so many people desire from their college experience. For myself at

least I understood the limitations of CUNY yet still realized that I would simply do better staying around New York City and the CUNY system was the best value even if it's not perfect.

AR: A month into Hunter College, do you regret your decision to stay within the system?

OS: No I don't regret my decision so far. The classes have been extremely interesting and I'm learning that there are even more opportunities within CUNY and Hunter than I expected. I learned for example that Hunter is one of only 9 schools in the country that offer a degree in Quantitative Biology (which fits well into my desire to major in statistics). I think the truth about Hunter, CUNY and New York City is that they're packed with things to do. It can be overwhelming but there are few places in the world that offer more to those who have the motivation to take advantage of them.



AR: What are you currently enjoying about your college that reinforced your choice to attend in the first place?

OS: It was the abundance of opportunities that are offered to me through the schools within the CUNY system. One look at the events page of their website, and you'll see so many interesting discussions and events taking place throughout New York City as well as having the opportunity to

participate in the study abroad programs of every single school in the CUNY system.

AR: If you could do it all again, would you still pick CUNY?

OS: Yes, I still think I would. I understood what I wanted and still feel that the CUNY system was the best for what I needed at a fraction of the cost of other schools.

AR: What advice would you give to those debating between CUNY or a private university?

OS: Truly understanding what you want will give you the best chance of doing well. People sometimes get stuck on this notion that you have to attend the top schools without thinking about location or cost - among a multitude of other things. To me finding the school that gives you the best motivation is vastly more important than finding the "best" school, where you lack the motivation needed to succeed.

Aleksandr Ruziyev is a Writing & Literature major, and member of HSAC. You can email him at athomson@outlook.com

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UPCOMING INFORMATION SESSIONS

SMITH & MT. HOLYOKE TRANSFER ADMISSIONS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1ST, 2014

4:30 PM ROOM E-501

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY TRANSFER ADMISSIONS

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7TH, 2014

5:00 PM ROOM E-101

JACK KENT COOKE TRANSFER SCHOLARSHIP

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15TH, 2014

2:30 PM ROOM E-147
5:00 PM ROOM E-101



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POSSIBILITIES OUTSIDE OF CUNY

BY STEVEN GARCIA

Many community college students have a preconceived notion that they are confined to transferring within the CUNY system. As a result, community college students believe that they have less of a chance of transferring elsewhere. Little do they realize that branching out of CUNY could be one of the best decisions of their lives. Fortunately, community college students have a shot at going to some of the most prestigious colleges in the world. A few of the colleges HSAC and LaGuardia students have successfully transferred to include Columbia university, Georgetown, NYU, Sarah Lawrence and many others.

Understandably, many community college students begin to ask these questions; can I afford to study elsewhere? Is paying for an expensive

college worth it? Can I get a better quality of education without having to stretch my finances? If so, where do I begin to look? While all these are very important questions to ask, let's just pretend for a few minutes that money is not an issue. Ask yourself, in which college would I most likely to succeed? Although tuition for private and top schools can exceed \$30,000 a year, that doesn't necessarily have to discourage anyone from applying. If a student is interested in attending and is in great academic standing, colleges and universities are often willing to negotiate financial aid packages and inform you of grants or merit scholarships that will be able to lower the cost of attendance. While keeping in mind one's personal finances is important, you do not want to discard the opportunity to attend a school you have a deep interest in.

Although the CUNY system is an affordable way to attain a decent education, I believe that private schools have more to offer.

Private colleges, especially the Ivy Leagues, are often highly regarded for their rigorous and stimulating curriculum, student life, and overall college experience. Student community is an essential and integral part of what make private colleges very appealing. Students in these schools truly enjoy being part of a community. Students at private institutions are always actively participating in discussions both in and out of the classroom as well as remaining fully engaged in a classroom culture.

Not only is the college experience more enjoyable, but attending a private college can help ease your life in the long run. Having a bachelors degree from Brown University

or Harvard is respected more than a bachelors degree from a CUNY school. Due to this simple fact, prestigious jobs can be attained easier for the Brown university student vs. the CUNY Community college students tend to feel discouraged by the prospect of applying to such schools. The perceived stigma of being a community college student brings along a self-made restriction when applying to big name schools. You all are entitled to dream big and to explore outside of the CUNY system. For all you know, you might just be the next student to go to Harvard. And while some might label that as "insane", remember that both HSAC and LaGuardia are filled with smart "insane" students who reach for the stars too.

Steven Garcia is a Business Administration major, member of HSAC, SCIP, and peer mentor for the CREAR FUTUROS program.



REPORTING FROM THE LAGUARDIA CLUB FAIR

BY MARISSA HERNANDEZ

The beginning of the semester is always a great way for students to familiarize themselves with all the opportunities that LaGuardia Community College has to offer. On September 10th in the courtyard across the E atrium,

LaGuardia held its bi-annual Club Fair, which had introduced several of LaGuardia's most active clubs and organizations. With each passing semester the club fair continues to establish its importance of introducing its students with ways to serve their community. What better way to do this than to become a

part of an organization that aims to promote volunteer work? The Club Fair's infrastructure is built around helping students figure out what environment they would be most comfortable in, in order to help them grow as a student.

Present at this event was Laguardia's own Honors Student Advisory Committee, which aims to help students become more involved in their education by covering the benefits of enrolling in Honors Courses. Aside from promoting these courses, HSAC places a special emphasis on the transfer process. The committee hosts transfer workshops in order to provide students, who are interested in transferring after LaGuardia, with information pertaining to the process.

As the day progressed, HSAC and other club representatives

worked diligently to attract students and provide them with information about their program. The event showcased performances from the theatre program, step team, and the cheerleaders. As the 2014 Fall Club Fair came to a close, HSAC collected three pages worth of signatures from students who were interested and wanted more information about the honors programs. If you are interested in learning more about the Honors Program or HSAC, we encourage you to stop by the Honors House in M-222 where students will be able to assist you with any questions you may have relating to your academics, honors courses, or any upcoming events. We hope to see you soon!

Marissa Hernandez is a Liberal Arts major & member of HSAC. You can email her at marissaz3hernandez@gmail.com



IS CUNY REALLY THE BEST OPTION FOR YOU? (CONTINUED)

Connecticut and DePaul University, both liberal arts colleges outside of New York City. Additionally, four-year colleges often have agreements to credit Associate's degree-holding transfer students with a certain minimum number of credits, so schools may go the extra mile to ensure that CUNY Pathways courses transfer seamlessly into their own common core requirements.



Applying to non-CUNY schools can become a daunting task, especially when you consider application/transcript fees and having to write several supplemental essays. Fees add up per school while writing supplements take time, commitment, and research. One often overlooked service that LaGuardia provides is application fee waivers. (Waivers can be found in the Office of Transfer Services in B215.) The most costly of all, however, is the time it takes to go through the entire process of choosing schools, ordering transcripts, obtaining waivers, and keeping in touch with both the LaGuardia departments and the Admissions departments at other schools. It is typically recommended that students begin the process of choosing schools, drafting personal statements, and asking professors for letters of recommendation before transferring into a four-year college. Student-run organization HSAC works to reach as much of the LaGuardia's population as possible to emphasize the importance of preparing early. However, at HSAC's biannual Transfer Workshop, we always come across students who are preparing to transfer but do not realize the process was so involved. This late-stage intervention limits the opportunities for students to get to know the diversity of four-year colleges available, making CUNY a more attractive option with its quicker, more seamless transfer process.

In addition to the existence of a

similar common core curriculum outside of CUNY, there is also the issue of affordability. While CUNY is publicly funded, many private institutions have funds of their own that are merit-based and need-based. As LaGuardia and Sarah Lawrence alumnus Rafael Tejada notes, "For example, NYU has a much bigger endowment than Sarah Lawrence does, but NYU has a much larger student population. At Sarah Lawrence, the endowment is spread more generously to the small number of students." Alumna Raven Gomez (Smith College '16) was accepted to multiple private institutions and found that they were receptive to providing more need-based aid after appealing to their Financial Aid Offices. Another method of affording an education at a private institution would be to look into programs specifically for transfer students, such as NYU's Community College Transfer Opportunity Program (CCTOP). CCTOP provides transfer students with 50% of their need-based financial aid, as well as pre-admission advising to ensure their credits transfer. A combination of the right school, federal aid, scholarships, and school-based aid may lead to a more affordable education than at a CUNY school with fewer loans post-graduation.

"However, some students choose CUNY for a variety of reasons that few other schools can match."

For example, some students prefer to stay in New York City for the culture or to stay close to family. Few other accredited four-year commuter schools exist within city boundaries other than NYU, Fordham, Columbia, Sarah Lawrence, St. John's, and select SUNY schools. Alumna Lillian Zepeda wrote recently in the Huffington Post Blog that NYU provided her with "no on-campus option for childcare and there was little flexibility" for her courses, and that in comparison her LaGuardia "undergraduate experience was rich". While schools like Smith College and SUNY Binghamton offer on-campus childcare, it is not the norm with most schools. Many independent minded students like Zepeda choose CUNY schools in order to juggle their jobs with courses and to make the most of their

school's co-curricular resources within their highly structured schedules. For LaGuardia students who know they need a specialized major that fits their New York City lifestyles, schools like Baruch or Hunter College that are known for certain competitive programs (Business and Education, respectively) may indeed be the best option.

There is a large discrepancy between what non-CUNY colleges can offer and how knowledgeable the LaGuardia student body is about these schools. HSAC looks to reduce this gap by informing students about the transferring process and the multitude of options they have through events such as the Transfer Workshop and the Transfer Peer Support Network. Whether or not students stay within CUNY or go to private schools to continue their education, it is a deeply individual choice. The most important point to remember during your transfer process is to be "active", take the initiative to do the research that will help you find the right school and program for your needs. Lastly, it is never too soon to start this process, so head over to the HSAC or Transfer Services Offices for tips on how to be a step ahead of the game!

Weily Lang is a Biology research student, and member of HSAC.

You can contact Weily on Twitter @WeilyLang

Carlos Galindo is a business administration major, and member of HSAC.

You can email him at carlitos139@yahoo.com

NEWSLETTER STAFF

KIMBERLY MOTA
EDITOR

JACQUELINE VELIZ
EDITOR

JOSHUA ROTBERT
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
& EDITOR

JASON HENDRICKSON
FACULTY ADVISOR