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THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE

NAVIGATE YOUR OWN PATH TO SUCCESS

BY RAY CORTEZ

Community colleges have a storied history in U.S. higher education and, to the surprise of some, are more or less unique to American culture. Although some countries have rough equivalents to the American community college, none of them are quite as developed as the associates degree granting junior college—their preferred name in the 1900s—which today enjoys proper 1st and 2nd year college courses; vocational certifications; athletic programs; and in some cases, in campus housing and an active Greek life.

It was not until the early 20th century when the fateful collision between Gilded Age economic demands and the precursor of Progressive Era political will birthed the early incarnation of the modern community college. High school

enrollment and graduation rates had reached record highs, but few high school grads were making the jump to college due to high tuition costs and the fact most universities were located in rural, far-off areas of the country, and many people were unwilling to venture so far from home. Simultaneously, traditional universities needed more students to finance their recent expansions, thus many new junior colleges were developed focused mainly on transferring students to their four-year counterparts, and some focused on vocational training, though most had yet to begin granting a formal degree.

With the advent of the Great Depression, community colleges shifted their focus almost exclusively to vocational training, in a government sponsored effort to grow the country's skilled labor force, thus

spurring the next significant wave of community college expansion, with 440 community colleges enrolling upwards of 70,000 students in 1930. The success of the G.I Bill and the maturation of the baby boomer generation resulted in the 1960s witnessing the largest expansion of community colleges in U.S. history. 457 community colleges were opened during the 1960s, more than the total number of community colleges in existence prior to that period. Our very own LaGuardia Community College is a product of this historic expansion. And it was during this period 2-year institutions began maturing into the entities we know today, implementing diversity programs to desegregate their student bodies and pioneering adult-student focused initiatives like in campus child care services and workforce retraining courses.

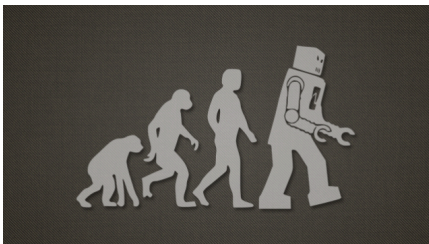
Historically, if there is a defining characteristic of community colleges it is their ability to address the economic and educational needs of the times. Today many experts believe we have entered the beginning of the next major revolution, coining it the Artificial Intelligence Revolution. Some experts even predict it will greatly surpass the impact of the Industrial Revolution. Backed by his Law of Accelerating Returns—the concept that the more advanced a civilization becomes, the faster the rate of progress it can achieve—futurist Ray Kurzweil thinks we'll achieve 1000 times the progress the 20th century achieved and that AI will be the prime fuel. And going by history, he may be right!

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Each major technological revolution has yielded acceleration in the rate of technological progress, so much that the time it takes for the future to become unfathomable to a person from a bygone time period has continued to decrease exponentially. Star Trek's communicators may have "predicted" cellphones, but it did so poorly, as today's smartphones are so much more capable than the cult communicators it depicted.

We use AI every day. The Siri's and Cortana's that recognize our voice commands are AIs designed to recognize human speech patterns. The Facebook feature that automatically recognizes your friends in a photo and tags them for you is achieved by an incredibly accurate facial recognition AI with access to Facebook's data servers (and all the information you've stored on them). And those Google searches you do to, you know, search for things, also an AI. In fact, it is one of the most sophisticated AIs on the planet. You see, most of us view Google as a search engine, but nearly since its inception, Google has actually used its search engine to teach it's AI



everything it's capable of learning, and it has learned a ton! But what does this have to do with community college? The fact increasingly sophisticated AIs

continue to become reality almost weekly means a great shift in the labor market is expected in the immediate future, necessitating an equally great shift in our educational landscape. Over half of U.S. stock shares are now traded by algorithmically based AI traders. While the days of hot shot day traders ala Boiler Room are not entirely gone, any semblance of them remaining are expected to be a distant memory in less than a decade's time. And companies involved in more immediately relevant functions of everyday life offer an even

more chilling caution. Upon a recent visit to Uber's New York offices I learned the over 25,000 drivers active in NYC are run exclusively by that office, in which only 25 people are involved in the administration and logistics of their drivers. The fact the company's ultimate goal is to convert its fleet of drivers into self-driving cars offers an incredible amount of insight to anyone paying attention. Wherever you fall in the ethical/moral spectrum of such a proposition, the fact remains the economic demand and will for self-driving cars is quite formidable, and economic feasibility has historically been the deciding factor for whether innovation becomes a reality or not.

This is not to say AIs will take all our jobs and we all need to become programmers and engineers. History teaches us technological innovations create at least as many jobs as they supplant. Rather, the AI revolution purports to increase the sophistication of our labor market well past the

present abilities of our workforce. And community colleges may once again prove to be the vessel we sail to widespread social mobility.

However, despite the Great Recession spurring record rates of enrollment in community colleges, according to the Department of Education, less than 33% of students graduate, and only about 16% ever go on to earn a bachelor's degree, noting a significant number of students don't even plan to earn their bachelor's.

**"IN AMERICA A QUALITY
EDUCATION CANNOT BE A
PRIVILEGE THAT IS RESERVED
FOR A FEW."**

-PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

And with tuitions continuing to rise, community colleges remain the only viable option for most to successfully launch their academic and professional careers. In what many sociologists have termed the Second Gilded Age, a seismic shift must occur in the resources and importance afforded to community colleges by both the public sector and the people. As a country, we are once again at a crossroads. Rather than look to community colleges as a last resort, we should strive to ensure they remain the centers of adroit educational innovation they have proven to be time and again in the past, if we hope for them to meet the unique educational demands of our time once again.

DID YOU KNOW?



Even if you are not a permanent resident of the U.S., you are still

entitled to pay in state tuition! If you are a student under DACA, and have been living in the state of New York for more than a year, you qualify for in-state rates. What's more, you can also be reimbursed for the current semester's tuition that you have

overpaid once you change your status from out-of-state student to in-state. For more information on what other benefits may be available to you, head over to M103A to the CREAR Futuros office.

HSAC AT THE NAT'L COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

BY MICHAEL RIVAS & IMRAN HUHN

Three of us—Kennya Pesantez, Michael Rivas, and Imran Huhn--were fortunate enough to attend the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) conference in Chicago. While making new friends who come from various schools across the nation, we learned about their honors program. Because we are community college students looking to transfer to a four-year school, we had the opportunity to listen to other students' experiences of said four-year school. This exposure gave us a sense of their school's culture. It is beneficial for transfer students like us to have a chance in attending academic conferences like the NCHC. Gathering insights is necessary for preparation to transition to four-year school.

We arrived to Chicago and checked into our hotel at around 10:00AM. Shortly after this, we decided to explore the windy city aimlessly. Our quest consisted of deep-dish pizza, which was substantial enough to fuel a long self-guided tour in the Chicago Cultural Center--a museum with architectural exhibits that is free and open to the public. Later that night we attended a social event structured to break out of our comfort zone and converse with other students. We made great friends and it was a nice reward for a successful day around the city.



The next morning, Imran participated in one of NCHC's signature sessions, the Teaching and Learning Student Fishbowl. It is an open conversation among a selected group of students, from different schools. These selected students, or "fish," sit in a circle and share their thoughts about the Honors student experience, while the audience

listens to their opinions outside of the circle. Listening to their insights was an eye-opening experience for Imran. A topic that struck him the most is the importance of writing--of which our Honors courses at LaGuardia Community College have already implemented even in Math courses--so it was exciting to support that educational model. This struck him the most because it reminds him of Richard Feynman—a theoretical physicist and noble laureate—who is known as “The Great Explainer.” He was someone who could explain the most complex concepts to a layman and have him/her understand it. From this ability, a study technique was developed called “The Feynman technique,” which requires an individual to take any concept that he/she does not understand and write about it without using any complex jargon. With this interest, he was excited to be a part of the fishbowl session; however, Imran had to cut the fish bowl session short to pick up the Freddy T. Davy Undergraduate Student Scholarship that he received. Dr. Koh, Dr. Wang and Dr. Blumberg nominated him. Our group was very proud of him.

The next day, Saturday, was crunch time: The LaGuardia delegation had to moderate panels! We spent all morning attending each other's panels. The panel that Michael moderated presented a statistical study on the use of online dating apps by college students. Although he has prior experience speaking publicly, he had never moderated in front of a large group of esteemed Honors students and faculty, and having Kennya and Dr. Koh in the crowd to support him made speaking a bit more manageable. We also attended a session called "Creating an Honors Program Environment Within a Community College Setting," which Kennya moderated. Kennya led the panelists' discussions about getting students more engaged in their honors program. Granted, the panelists were

still experimenting various ways to get students involved and stay involved, and they acknowledge different issues that students are facing. So the issue in question is how students can be encouraged to take on extra obligations for their honors program and stay motivated while being involved in activities outside of it. Towards the end they shared their experiences and what they hope to accomplish in the future. Finally, Imran, moderated for “Models of Learning Portfolio in Honors for Students and Program Development” where professors share their experience with ePortfolio to enhance students writing abilities. After a long day of moderating and attending panels it was time for the gala event.



The gala was a big celebration for the whole conference. It felt like the Oscars! Everyone wore ties, black dresses, and ate steak. There was an improvisational comedy show by the famed second city comedy company, speeches, and a dance right after. The rest of the night was spent with new friends; it was a great night of celebration.

Although this is just a mere chronological recap of NCHC, there is something to be learned from this experience. Throughout the whole trip, we were looking at everything from an outside perspective, in admiration. We saw the Honors students at NCHC as a separate entity. We saw them as the future scholars, doctors, lawyers, and leaders of the country. But when we spoke to most of them, we saw many similarities. The more students we mingled with, the more we felt our group was analogous to these other Honors students. In short, LaGuardia's Honors Program and Honors students, in many ways can be similar to Honors programs around the country. We are also the future of America and will positively contribute to a better world in the future.



HEADS UP AMERICA:

MAKING COLLEGE TUITION FREE FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

BY MARC LOPEZ

LaGuardia was honored to welcome the Second Lady Dr. Jill Biden this past November. It was very fitting that she visited because the Heads Up America campaign, which she has been promoting nationally, highlights community colleges as a smart option towards obtaining a degree. Heads Up America also outlines a plan to stimulate the economy by creating new jobs as well.

President Obama has outlined his plan on the whitehouse.gov website and announced grants totaling \$175 million dollars that have been awarded to 46 public/private companies, who in turn have pledged to train and hire more than 34,000 new apprentices in industries such as IT and advanced manufacturing. These new high skilled jobs increase personal income for citizens and also make America more competitive on a global scale. In

regards of education accessibility Heads Up America has proposed the idea of a making the first two years of a college degree the norm, similar to a high school diploma. Students who are hard working would be eligible for the program.

The factors of tuition increase differ at each school. A mixture of state budget -cuts, increase of school fees, sports programs that cost more to run than what they actually bring in, and inflation are the main reason for the increase. On the National Conference Of State Legislatures website it states, "Since 1990 the national tuition average at public four year institutions has increased by 161 percent and two year institutions have risen by 102 percent." These numbers were adjusted for inflation. It should also be noted that schools are placed in a difficult position as well. The cost of running an educational institution rises every year and so has inflation, so much that it has



risen faster than tuition ever since 1980. Coupled with state budget cuts schools are left to fill gap in cost by raising price.

Educational institutions are what fuel a nation for success. More specifically, institutions that offer post secondary educations. When a person invests in an education they not only improve themselves, they have a positive effect on those around them as well. Studies have shown that the higher the level of education achieved by a nations citizenry correlates to lower crime rates as well as health care costs. It would pay back greater dividends for state and federal legislators to invest in America's education.

Nowadays, tuition and expenses are exceedingly high, to the point that some students are forced to drop some of their courses or, worse, stop going to school and continue working. Further, the average student who graduates today from a 4-year school owes \$28,000 in student loans. This has alarmed government officials and concerned citizens alike, yielding many state and federal level proposals aimed at decreasing the financial burden of students. One campaign, which of launched in September 2015 and supports the advocacy of alleviating students' debt, is the America's College Promise Act, more commonly known as the Heads Up America Campaign.

To speak more on the campaign, I recently had the privilege of



HEADS UP LAGUARDIA:

AN INTERVIEW WITH CLAUDIA CHAN

BY PATRICK LAVILLA

interviewing Claudia Chan, the Government Relations Manager of LaGuardia Community College whose has been working with different groups across campus around the Heads Up America Campaign.

Patrick Lavilla: *Hi Claudia, tell us a little bit about yourself and your role in the Heads Up America Campaign.*

Claudia Chan: Hello Patrick, I'm Claudia Chan, the Government Relations Manager at LaGuardia

Community College. I am the liaison between government officials/agencies and the college. I have been working with College student leaders, faculty and staff to gather attention and support for Heads Up America's campaign, which, if enacted, will benefit LaGuardia students.

PL: *What is the general mission of Heads Up America?*

CC: Heads Up America is [President] Obama's proposal to provide free community college for students who are



willing to work for it. The idea is to rebuild the nation's standard of quality college education, thus making the country the world leader in college education system, as well as making it accessible to everyone [in community colleges], as high school became a hundred years ago.

PL: What is the timeline and target dates of the campaign?

CC: Since the launch of Heads Up America last September 2015, our goal is to continue asking for students' support by signing online petitions and raising awareness through June 2016. The campaign is expected to last for three years and its main goal is to gather the various reactions and collective observations from students, teachers and peers, whether they approve of the notion of granting two years of free tuition to deserving students that are willing to work for it.

PL: What outreach programs and activities has LaGuardia Community College carried out to make this campaign as effective as possible?

CC: At the launch of the campaign, President Obama gave a speech discussing the said issue [of students being priced out of a college education] and this was broadcasted live in all community colleges nationwide.

We also held our Week of Action last Oct. 26-29 wherein we set up tabling

events asking students to sign the petition and requesting them to stop by our "Heads Up" Photo booth wherein they can post their pictures on their social media accounts and spread the word by including #HeadsUpAmerica & #LAGCC in their captions. And, on November 4th, Dr. Biden, the second lady and executive chair of the campaign, visited the campus to further promote its advocacy. We hope to expand this CUNY-wide and eventually from there expand it to SUNY and statewide.

PL: How positive has the student response been? Has the movement been as successful as expected thus far?

CC: Students have been very aware of this issue due to the help of several student organizations conducting tabling events and the posted placards located at the main entrance of the E-building, which prompts to ask students about their plans "if community college was free." Moreover, the Heads Up LaGuardia signs posted above the E-atrium [leads] a lot of students to wonder what Heads Up America -- "heads up LaGuardia in our case -- is all about.

PL: What challenges to the #HeadsUpAmerica movement would you say are expected to move forward?

CC: I think to get each state to support it and have a larger movement. This is a really big initiative and things like this

don't happen overnight. It takes investment from the government as well as the community [along with] student and business support.

PL: There are thousands of community colleges in the U.S.; How did LAGCC become so prominently involved?

CC: We became actively involved with this movement [since] LaGuardia Community College has been concerned with touching on Community College issues by being innovative through teaching and outreach to students as well as by remaining very vocal on the benefits of attending community college. Currently, Gail Mellow, president of LaGuardia is chair of the New York State Heads Up America Task Force so we are leading and we can continue to lead, but I believe this is important to do in partnership with other community colleges.

PL: In what ways can students who are excited about the #HeadsUpAmerica, movement help out? Where can they go?

CC: To pledge their support and know more about the campaign they can visit headsupamerica.us. For further information on our initiatives, they can either contact me or Patrick Lavilla at headsupnewyork@gmail.com or @headsupLAGCC on Twitter.

A VISIT TO UPENN

A group of students in the Honors program took the opportunity to visit the University of Pennsylvania's (UPenn) campus and gather some information from the College of Liberal and Professional Studies (LPS) program. Here are the top ten things they have learned during the trip to UPenn:

Steven Garcia Thibault Kopp
Michael Rivas Imran Huhn

1. UPenn offers The Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program. This is a program that allows college students to train for the United States military and attend school.

2. By taking courses towards the selected major from 9-5PM and general studies courses from 5-11PM, you will get a reduced tuition rate.

3. When choosing a major under the LPS program, note that courses certain majors are only available during evening course hours.

4. UPenn LPS offers Phi Theta Kappa scholarships for part-time students only.

5. UPenn LPS students choose their majors and minors only from the LPS's list of program studies.

6. The Franklin Building is where the financial aid office is located and they offer walk-in meetings.

7. You can take classes at the Wharton school of Business, but cannot major in their study programs.

8. At UPenn, 1 course unit equals 3 credits.

9. Applicants must take and submit the SAT; international students need to take the TOEFL.

10. UPenn is full of historical landmarks; for example, Benjamin Franklin's desk is located in the library.

Members of the Honors program will continue to create opportunities for campus visits, just like this one. For more information please visit us in room M-222.

DEMOCRACY & EDUCATION

BY KONSTANDINOS GOBAKIS

Thousands of years ago, Aristotle proclaimed that “Democracy is when the indigent, and not the men of property, are the rulers” In other words under a democratic regime, the ruling of the nation should be done by the needy. By saying this Aristotle did not only mean that the common people should be governing the society and not the ones in power, but also that there should be equal opportunities for all. In spite of this being the case in most democratic nations, such as Greece, many would argue that paternalistic plutocracy is more widespread. However democratic and inclusive Greece’s government might be, it is not so when it comes to education. Education in Greece is free in the most part, as there are private universities, but enrollment in colleges is extremely difficult. As a result many passionate (though unfortunate) students who lack the money to pay for tutoring and in general do not have the resources needed, such as money to pay for a house that is around their campus, cannot go to college. Having experienced the bewilderment that arises when there is passion for higher education, but lack of resources available to use to get into college, I have come to further embrace higher education because it is available to me now and it is becoming a necessity.

Growing up in Greece, school was difficult without getting tutoring from private institutions, which consequently led to confusion when studying for my classes. At this pace, it was nearly impossible to learn. After nearly

finishing high school, I was unsure of what career to pursue and I was afraid that I would not find a job after graduating. Incidentally, before migrating to the U.S. the Greece’s unemployment rate was over 25% and unfortunately it has not improved much since then (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Therefore, I decided to take a drastic and life-changing action and move to the United States where higher education would be accessible. The Bureau of Labor Statistics pointed out that 64.8% of 2014 high school graduates entered a college or university in the United States, which is significantly greater number of students compared to Greece. In spite of the numbers, there are many significant differences in education between the two countries, i.e. the pedagogy. Based on my own experience, in both educational systems, I feel that the American educational institutions have a more radical understanding of learning. That is, most teachers and professors try to foster classes where everyone, regardless of prior knowledge, can learn and are more inviting to students. In addition, educators discuss issues more openly, e.g. religion, gender sexuality, challenge social norms and more. Conversely, in Greece I felt that educators were paying more attention to those who knew more (leading to some type of elitism), mostly due to their ability to afford outside academic assistance, and disregarded those who did not know and try as much. So far, one could argue that Greece’s education is more conservative and less inclusive than the American. Similarly to the SAT test, in Greece there is a similar

comprehension test. Ultimately, you test score will determine which university you will get accepted into and limit what options of majors you have to choose from. However, in the United States, there are opportunities for those who did not do well in their primary and secondary education years to still go to college and study what they like such as one can do at a Community College. Whereas, in Greece, one could only retake the final high school exam, which means they would have to wait another year, to go to the institution they want. Otherwise, students could join a vocational school where they would be taught hands on jobs in order to get into the workforce. Ultimately when students grow up with the privilege of having educational support, those without it can be cast out from opportunities, and denied academic attention regardless of their willingness to pursue higher education.

Overall, in the world we live today where technology is advancing and ideas spreading so fast, it is impossible to miss the importance of getting a good education to not only become a more knowledgeable member of society, but also to transform yourself and open up more doors for your future. Therefore, we need to be fully aware of what we wish to pursue in order to maximize the opportunities offered to us, regardless of our class and country of origin.

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