Alumni Relations Office Non-Academic Program Review

Eugenio María de Hostos Community College of The City University of New York

Office Overview

Established in July 2003 at the request of President Dolores M. Fernández, the Alumni Relations Office at Eugenio María de Hostos Community College is the link between the institution and its graduates by offering an array of services and visiting privileges resulting in their involvement in the day-to-day life of the college and its students. The Alumni Office is housed under the college's Division of Institutional Advancement and has 3 primary functions: services to alumni, outreach to alumni, and development.

Services to Alumni

One of the primary functions of any college alumni office is to find ways to serve its alumni. Hostos Community College is a unique school in that it was born from the community and primarily serves the community in which it is housed; the community of the South Bronx (where Hostos is located) serves historically underserved students. Thus, providing services to students while they are enrolled at Hostos and after they graduate is important to their long-term success. Hostos alumni are served in various ways.

One of the ways that the Alumni Office serves alumni is through the creation and administration of a Hostos Alumni Photo ID Card. The alumni office developed this card to give Hostos graduates access to the college's facilities, as well as discount programs on campus and elsewhere. To date, the Alumni Relations Office has issued over 2,000 alumni photo ID card letters. For a lifetime one-time fee of \$20 alumni are able to attain a card which entitles them to:

- Access to the Hostos library, computer labs, and fitness centers; and
- A 20% discount for alumni and up to three family members for performances at the Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture.

Providing access to the Alumni ID card is a collaborative effort between the Alumni office that collects alumni information to provide access to the facilities and the college's Office of Public Safety.

Because education is a lifelong endeavor, the Alumni Relations Office offers Hostos graduates educational enrichment and personal development courses in partnership with the college's Division of Continuing Education and Workforce Development (CEWD). Through an arrangement with CEWD, alumni and their family members receive a 15% discount for courses offered by the Department of Continuing Education and Workforce Development.

The Alumni Office also works to serve Alumni's professional development by developing an integrated and internal alumni services program with the Student Activities, Career Services, and Transfer offices. Since 2003, the Alumni Relations Office has collaborated with the Career Services Office to offer graduates free-of-charge workshops on such topics as resume writing and interview skills as well as job search, interview, and placement services. Career Services has also identified a full-time employee to serve as a liaison to the Alumni Relations Office and meet with graduates who request their services. Alumni are also invited to participate in Career Services' annual job fair.

Outreach to Alumni

Part of being able to better serve alumni and ensure their continued success is establishing ways to better reach out to and engage alumni in the culture of their alma mater. To be able to reach students after they graduate, the Alumni Office established the first alumni database in Raiser's Edge, based on hard records from the Registrar's Office (1973 to 1987), historical records from the college's prior general Student Information Management System (SIMS), and what is now the CUNY First system. Currently, there are over 15,000 alumni records in Raiser's Edge system. The office is in the process of adding information from the most recent 2014 graduating class.

To support outreach efforts, the Alumni Relations Office entered into a contract with Constant Contact (an email blast company) in 2009, in order to send college news to Hostos graduates with an email on record and ultimately to keep alumni e-mails updated. Additionally, the Alumni Office published (with Harris Connect) the first Alumni Directory in 2011, which resulted in more updated contact information. The office also maintains communication with alumni through social media, including Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. News about the college and open invitations to events are disseminated to alumni and other supporters by these means.

Additionally, the alumni office works actively to engage Alumni in the culture of Hostos and to cultivate relationships that are mutually beneficial for both the college and the alumni. To do so, the Alumni Relations Office has developed many ongoing events and initiatives such as:

- Holding three bi-annual homecoming celebrations (2008, 2010 and 2012) for alumni, with participation ranging from 700 to 900 people.
- Holding the Dental Hygiene 40th Anniversary Reunion in 2010 with over 250 alumni participating.
- Holding the first alumni reunion in Puerto Rico in 2010.
- Holding the first alumni reunion in the Dominican Republic in 2011.
- Developing the first Alumni Chorus in 2008.

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¹ Over 1,400 alumni inquired about the directory, and more than 800 purchased the package, priced at \$120 each.

• Developing the first Alumni Speakers Bureau in 2012 (which encourages alumni to become role models and mentors for current Hostos students and members of the community, by sharing their own experiences and professional expertise in areas such as education and health services).

Development

During 2011 to 2013 development was one of the largest functions of the Alumni Relations Office. Most of the office's time and resources are spent in this area. The alumni office provides support to the Division of Institutional Advancement's general development efforts, such as actively participating in all fundraising initiatives sponsored by the college such as galas, scholarships, silent auctions, and golf outings. With regards to development activities that are related to alumni or soon-to-be graduates, the Alumni office:

- Established and manages The Circle of 100 Scholarship and Emergency Fund for candidates for graduation in 2007, through the CUNY Voluntary Charitable Campaign.
- Established transfer scholarships for candidates of graduation.
- Engaged in development activities that have allowed for the awarding of grants and scholarships to over 300 students who had completed 40 credits or more but were experiencing financial adversity.
- Created the Virginia Paris Scholarship for Freshman Students.
- Conducted the first alumni annual giving campaign in 2008.
- Created the New York Charities "online giving" site to facilitate contributions from alumni and other supporters of the college.²

Office Mission, Goals, and Objectives

The mission of the Alumni Relations Office is to keep an open and active relationship with all Hostos graduates. As graduates are a great source of pride and the ultimate accomplishment of an institution of higher learning, the Alumni Relations Office seeks to build and sustain strong and mutually beneficial relationships between the College and its graduates. To this end, the Alumni Relations Office has established the following goals and objectives:

- To promote interest on the part of our alumni in the general welfare of the College, its faculty, staff, and students.
- To promote good will and strong relationships between Hostos graduates and the institution.
- To inform alumni about key events and activities in order to keep them engaged in the day-to-day life of the College.

² After extensive research, New York Charities was selected to serve as the intermediary agency between the college and its donors.

- To cultivate alumni as potential contributors to support scholarship and emergency funds for students facing unforeseen financial adversity.
- To support the College's general fundraising efforts by seeking private and public funds that will benefit the institution.

Outcomes Assessment

Based on the core of the Hostos mission, the Alumni Relations Office offers an array of services and engages in several functions that are geared to meet our graduates' identified needs but also the needs of the college. The following outcomes are organized by primary function area and serve to illustrate the progress that the Alumni Office is making toward meeting its goals and objectives:

Services to Alumni

- Over 2,000 graduates have obtained Alumni ID cards that provide access to the general facilities of the college; included in this figure are the 400 alumni cards that have been issued by the Public Safety Department since the beginning of 2013, when the Public Safety Department began issuing these cards.
- In the past 3 years, over 300 graduates have participated in Career Services' Job Fairs.³
- In May 2013, with assistance from personnel of the College's Career Services office, Transfer office, Student and Activities office and the Public Safety Department, the Alumni Relations Office launched its first "Candidate for Graduation Lunch and Orientation". More than 200 new graduates participated in this event, and over 100 of the attendees completed an evaluation and a survey on how to provide better service for our alumni.

Outreach to Alumni

• The Alumni Relations Office's partnership with Harris Connects, to publish the first Hostos Alumni Official Directory, has so far yielded:

- o 1,400 inquiries about the directory:
- o 3,000 updated alumni mailing addresses; and
- o 1,500 updated alumni e-mail addresses.

³ The collaboration and planning between these offices has also resulted in a special Alumni VIP Start

Room at the job fairs. Graduates from the five most recent graduating classes are invited to the VIP room, where they are served lunch, have their resumes reviewed, and schedule appointments with potential employees. At the most recent job fair over 100 alumni visited the VIP room. The Alumni Relations Office secured the sponsorship of GEICO to cover the cost of the VIP Room.

⁴ This is an event intended to prepare students for their upcoming graduation by informing them on what to expect/plan for before, during, and after graduation and linking them with resources to prepare for the transition.

- Since the inception of the Online Alumni Speakers Bureau in 2012, over 40 Hostos graduates have volunteered to share their professional expertise in areas such as education and health services with the College and the community.⁵
- In 2012 the Alumni Relations Office coordinated the 3rd Homecoming Weekend Celebration, with over 100 attending the kickoff reception on Friday, September 27, and over 700 participating in for the Sunday Homecoming Parade and Celebration.⁶

Additionally, in order to gauge alumni satisfaction with their college degrees; affinity to the college and their chosen fields; and the quality of education offered by Hostos, a pilot survey was conducted of 127 candidates who completed the graduation orientation event in 2013 (titled "Candidate for Graduation Lunch and Orientation"). Some of the more noteworthy results from this survey included (see Appendix A for more results):

- 45% of the respondents considered faculty to be the key factor contributing to success in their studies at Hostos and 30.6% indicated that the quality of a Hostos education was a key factor;
- 76.6% of respondents indicated that—if they had to choose again—they would "probably" or "definitely" choose to attend Hostos; and
- Approximately 66% of respondents rated the quality of a Hostos education as "comparable" or "better" to that of other colleges.

Development

- As a result of the office's participation in major college fundraising initiatives, the college was able to garner contributions of over \$100,000 for the Hostos Galas of 2011, 2012, and 2013, which included the proceeds from a silent auction that yielded \$15,000 in additional revenues.⁷
- The Circle of 100 Scholarship and Emergency Fund, coordinated by the Alumni Relations Office, has raised over \$170,000 in donations since its inception in 2007; \$50,000 of which were received during the last 3 academic years.

External Partnerships and Collaborations

Adequately providing services to Hostos' alumni necessitates the need for the Alumni Relations Office to cultivate internal collaborations and external partnerships. Below is a list of the partnerships and collaborations that have helped to provide services to our alumni and garner resources for alumni and current students.

External Partnerships

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⁵ The Speakers Bureau was launched during the Homecoming Weekend Celebration in September 2012. ⁶ In both the first Homecoming Weekend Celebration in 2008 and the second in 2010, approximately 900 people attended, making the total participation number for all three celebrations approximately 2,500. ⁷ During these academic years, a significant number of financial supporters for the college were identified, including Affinity Health Plan, the New York Spanish Chamber of Commerce, Sovereign/Santander Bank, Health First, The New York Botanical Garden, and the Bronx Zoo.

- Through the Circle of 100 Scholarship and Emergency Fund, The Alumni Relations Office collaborates with the Diversity Foundation to secure scholarships and awards for current Hostos students. The Ernesto Malave, Mexican, Dominican, and Martin Luther King scholarships are funded by private donations through the Hostos Foundation. From 2011 to 2013, over 50 students were awarded scholarships of \$500.
- Since 2010, an affinity program between the Alumni Relations Office and the Government Employees Insurance Company (GEICO) has brought in approximately \$3,000 annually. Also through its connection with Alumni Relations, GEICO has been a sponsor of the Career Services Office's Job Fair VIP Alumni Start Program, the Hostos Gala, the Kwanzaa Scholarship, and the annual Golf Outing.
- In 2012 the Alumni Relations Office began an affinity Program with 5Linx. This program allows Hostos faculty, staff, and students to purchase television, telephone, and insurance products, with the College receiving revenues from those purchases.
- Hostos Community College and Lehman College are working together to plan a dual alumni program in which graduates from both institutions will be engaged.
- The Alumni Relations Office is a part of the CUNY Alumni Council, which contains representation from all the Alumni offices across CUNY schools. With the support and feedback from the CUNY Alumni Council, which was established in 2005, the Hostos Alumni Office has grown rapidly, which has resulted in the following institutional-building accomplishments:
 - The development of the affinity program with GEICO;
 - The opening of an auxiliary enterprises account (#25) for contributions to the alumni office and an Hostos Foundation account (#36) for contributions to the Circle of 100 Scholarship and Emergency Fund;
 - o The implementation of the Alumni Raiser's Edge Database; and
 - The publication of the first alumni brochure and an updated second version (in collaboration with the Communications Office).

Internal Collaborations

- The Alumni Relations Office works closely with the following offices within Hostos Community College to assist Hostos alumni (and candidates for graduation) with connecting to career services, accessing college facilities, locating resources, and remaining engaged with the Hostos community:
 - Transfer Services Office
 - o Business Office
 - Communications Office
 - Career Services Office
 - o The College Opportunity to Prepare for Employment (COPE) program
 - o Registrar's Office
 - Student Activities Office
 - o Public Safety Office

• The Hostos operational plan encourages collaboration among divisions of the College, and consequently, the Alumni Relations Office has developed a strong relationship with the Division of Continuing Education and Workforce Development. Through this collaboration, the division has agreed to include alumni more prominently in marketing campaigns, to provide them with free (or low-cost) enrichment workshops, and to secure some free-of-charge spaces for them in the business certificate program.

Customer Analysis

According to the most current information, the alumni database of over 17,000 graduates shows that over 6,500, still live in the Bronx. Seven thousand others now make their homes in other parts of the city, with the largest concentrations being in Washington Heights, East Harlem, and Brooklyn. The next largest group is in Florida.

With their alumni ID cards, Hostos graduates can move freely throughout the College. Those who return to the without an ID card are encouraged obtain one by visiting the Public Safety Office. The Alumni Relations Office maintains a daily login of former students who drop in. There the graduate can complete an alumni inquiry card noting attribute, social media, employment, education and alumni speakers' bureau information. The alumni office files reflect the following:

Alumni Relations Office Contact with Alumni					
	2011	2012	2013		
Alumni visiting the office	398	438	323		
Alumni who paid the id fee	180	126	170		
Alumni who joined the Speakers Bureau	N/A	40	162*		

^{*}Waiting to be added into the online system

A similar card is collected in the Career Services Office. This office requires the presentation of an alumni ID before providing services. The following table reflects the number of alumni served by this office over the past three years.

Career Services Office Alumni Contact and Services					
	2011	2012	2013		
Alumni attending workshops	196	206	446		
Alumni attending Career Fair	45	64	85		

⁸ The Alumni Relations Office should have more updated information in November 2014.

Personnel, Facilities, and Resources

Personnel:

A full-time director and two part-time college assistants staff the Alumni Relations Office. The office's director coordinates alumni activities in collaboration with other alumni service areas at the college, such as the Development, Career Services, Transfer, Public Safety, Library, Continuing Education and Workforce Development, and Registrar's Offices. The Director actively participates in the coordination of The Circle of 100 Scholarship and Emergency Fund planning and coordination of all fundraising activities to secure moneys for students in need who are nearing graduation. In addition, the director assists with all fundraising activities conducted by the Division of Institutional Advancement.

Two college assistants are responsible for day-to-day services for graduates who visit or call the Alumni Relations Office. In addition, they provide general receptionist services for the Division and for current students requesting scholarship information and general services from other offices. They are also responsible for keeping accounts of all funds received by the office, and for filing and managing paperwork related to the issuing of alumni ID cards. In order to keep the office staffed at all business hours, an Alumni Office Work Schedule is prepared every semester, reflecting employee's availability to work from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. One college assistant is in charge of technology and social media and alumni data updates, while the other is responsible for accounting and finances, the office calendar, event planning, and assisting with the general management of the office. Both college assistants have been trained to alumni walk-ins requesting alumni ID cards or other general services from the college.

The office itself only has 3 staff, 2 of whom are part-time, to conduct all alumni related activities for the entire college. This limited staffing hampers the office's ability to expand, plan additional activities, and provide direct services to alumni. The shortage of full-time personnel assigned to this area complicates day-to-day planning and adds additional stress and responsibilities on the Director who often has to engage in providing direct services to current students and alumni who call or visit the office, in addition to providing strategic management, planning, and oversight (see "SWOT Analysis" section for more discussion on this challenge).

Facilities:

The office is housed within the Division of Institutional Advancement in the Savoy Building. The part-time college assistants occupied two stations in the reception area, and there is one private office for the director.

Resources:

A few years ago the Alumni Relations Office managed its own budget. However, the Alumni Relations Office's budget is now combined with that of the Division for Institutional Advancement. Other than personal items such as publications and office

supplies are requested through the Vice President's Office. The following are personnel and non-personnel allocations and expenses for the past three years:

ALUMNI BUDGET					
	2011	2012	2013		
Personnel					
Full-time	\$116,000	\$116,000	\$116,000		
Part-time	\$11,358	\$18,084	\$20,192		
Non-Personnel					
Publications	\$0	\$3,000 (brochure)	\$2,000 (Folder)		
Traveling	\$0	\$0	\$0		
Computer/printer	\$0	\$0	\$3,000		
Consultant	\$0	\$5000 ⁹	\$0		

The Office also has an Auxiliary Enterprises Account (#25) in which the \$20.00 fees are deposited. These funds are unrestricted and may be used for alumni events and activities. A cumulative report is available from the Business Office.

AUXILIARY ENTERPRISES ACCOUNT (#25)					
	2011	2012	2013		
Deposits	\$7,087	\$5,081	\$3,786		
Expenses	\$5,191	\$4,877	\$4,662		

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats (SWOT Analysis)

The SWOT section of this report seeks to identify areas of strength and those in need of improvement within the Alumni Relations Office at Hostos Community College.

Strengths

The office has a well-established system for attending to students who are close to graduation, as well as graduates who visit the office. The office's college assistants have been trained to provide information for students seeking financial support, recent graduates wishing to exchange their college ID cards for alumni ID cards, and alumni seeking to reconnect with the college.

One of the biggest strengths of the Alumni Relations Office is its strong development practices/protocols. The Alumni Relations Office has well-established policies and budget procedures in place, including those for processing expenses and revenues. The Director integrated the Alumni Relations planning process with that of the Division of Institutional Advancement rerouting all event payments to their area, reporting all

⁹ The consultant was hired to support in the development and administration of the online Alumni Speakers Bureau that was established in 2012.

CUNY charitable campaign results to the Vice President and the Raiser's Edge Manager, coordinating "Give to Hostos" alumni online payments with the Division, and conducting a silent auction at the annual gala.

Another strength of the Alumni Relations Office is its leading role in the CUNY Alumni Council. The Alumni Relations Office at Hostos Community College has earned the reputation of being innovators—showing ingenuity and creativity—by piloting new initiatives to better serve alumni, with the guidance and support of the CUNY Alumni Council. The implementation of "The Circle of 100" Scholarship and Emergency Fund, for example, has been praised by the University and the Admissions Alumni Council. In addition, the College's alumni ID card, online alumni speakers' bureau, homecoming celebration, and alumni reunions in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic have been also recognized as models at the Council and University level. The Director has conveyed a clear message to the Hostos community and also to the University that it is important to have a campus-based Alumni Relations Office that is committed to finding funds for emergency grants for potential graduates who are experiencing financial adversities.

Weaknesses

Limited staffing remains a major challenge for the Alumni Relations Office as it hampers the office's ability to expand, plan additional events, and provide direct services to alumni. Although all office staff are cross-trained to be able to provide an array of alumni services, having a high number of visitors and a shortage of personnel hampers the office's ability to serve our constituencies effectively; assisting walk-ins sometimes takes a secondary role to other work duties, particularly during high-event seasons. Often, certain initiatives or projects have to be postponed simply due to lack of personnel. For example, the Alumni Relations Office began holding bi-annual Homecoming Celebrations to further engage alumni and cultivate alumni as potential contributors. Although the next celebration was slated to be held in 2014, the Alumni Relations Office was not able to plan or organize this event last year due to competing priorities and limited time and resources.

The impact of integrating the Alumni Relations Office with the Division of Institutional Advancement has not been fully analyzed in an effective and efficient manner. Alumni staff is frequently assigned to support development activities, which challenges the office's ability to concentrate on alumni events and activities. ¹⁰ Often, one area competes with the other for time and resources, particularly during times of major fundraising events such as the galas and golf outings.

Another weakness is that the Alumni database in Raiser's Edge needs to be updated. The Alumni part-time staff needs to be trained to update data in the system. In addition, they need to be trained to create alumni events in the system and to input new data collected,

¹⁰ It should be mentioned that this issue has been discussed extensively at meetings of the CUNY Alumni Directors Council, as well as in the College Association in Advancement in Education (CASE) conferences attended by the development and alumni personnel.

on a daily basis. At present, there is not such a system in place and coordinated by the Alumni Relations Office because (as previously mentioned) staffing is very limited, as is the time available to engage in this endeavor. Currently, the Division for Institutional Advancement's Data Specialist, in conjunction with the Alumni Relations Office, is researching companies in preparation for a major updating and verification of all alumni data in Raiser's Edge. The Raiser's Edge data were updated and filtered through a verification process over seven years ago. ¹¹ The Wealth Engine in Raiser's Edge has not been updated in more than seven years; thus, the Alumni Relations Office alumni data contain a significant number of obsolete addresses and telephone numbers. Moreover, the Alumni office, in conjunction with the Development Office, needs to develop a protocol system for Raiser's Edge as having outdated data for many alumni has a negative impact on fundraising efforts.

Opportunities

In the past, the Alumni Relations Office produced and distributed an alumni newsletter; however, this newsletter was discontinued in 2008. At present, the Division of Institutional Advancement's e-newsletter, which is distributed through Constant Contact email services, includes an alumni section. However, this e-newsletter is received by only a small number of the alumni in our database system. ¹² In light of this, the Alumni Relations Office developed an alumni Facebook page to communicate with graduates and their families. A college assistant has been assigned to manage this Facebook account. Because of limited staffing, the alumni page is not updated as frequently as needed. However, there is an opportunity to work on better utilizing this Facebook page as an outreach tool since the page (so far) has demonstrated its potential effectiveness.

As a result of the limited resources allocated to the Alumni Relations Office a cost-effective, cross-divisional approach has been developed to provide much needed services to alumni by collaborating with the offices of Student Activities, Career Services, and Transfer. The objective is to coordinate resources in order to support all services and events targeting the Hostos alumni. Through these activities, the Alumni Relations Office has identified an opportunity to work closely with the newly appointed Development Director to identify alumni attending these collaborative college events and create a cultivation process for these identified alumni.

Future Directions and Recommendations

As the College prepares to implement the Operational Plan for 2014-15, the Alumni Relations Office is readying to meet its responsibilities directly related to the plan's goals and objectives. As stated in this document, the office will do the following:

• Secure the participation of ten members of the Alumni Speakers Bureau to connect with first-year and transfer students.

¹¹ Through the publication of the Harris Connect directory, the office updated over 3,000 addresses and 1,500 emails in 2011. However,

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¹² Out of 17,000 names, fewer than 4,000 have email addresses in Constant Contact.

- Secure funding for two Circle of 100 Scholarships of \$1,000, now renamed the Gerald J. Meyer Transfer Scholarship, for transfer students.
- Provide assistance with a communications campaign by securing alumni representatives to inform first-year students about key remediation policies at Hostos.
- Identify eight alumni to serve as ambassadors to speak on the benefits of remedial and developmental education.
- Identify three (3) workforce partnership opportunities obtained through alumni.
- Assist the Development and Communications Offices with the development and implementation of an online alumni community.
- Assist the Development Office with the creation of a pipeline of corporate, foundation and individual prospects that will enable the OIA to meet its overall fundraising goal of a 10% increase.

fundraising goal of a 10% increase.

- Assist the Development Office with a plan to standardize alumni data input protocols the for Raiser's Edge development system to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of information in the system.
- Work with the Development Office to launch an annual alumni-giving program.
- Secure alumni participation in the Communications Office's plan "current news" component for the college website and e-newsletter.

Based on the office Alumni Relations Office's self-study, efforts should be placed in the following areas:

- Develop a plan to secure an additional full-time professional employee.
- Strengthen the alumni database in Raiser's Edge by adding current information, which is collected by the office on a daily basis. This will require extensive training of the part-time staff, as well as the monitoring of the input of information into the system.
- Develop and distribute an alumni publication (newsletter/report) once or twice a
 year highlighting accomplishments of alumni and the college community. Funds
 should be allocated to mail this publication to over 17,000 alumni with addresses
 on file.

- Delineate a yearly plan for alumni networking activities that are apart and separate from development activities, thus, allowing the office to more squarely focus on its alumni outreach function.
- Complete and administer an alumni survey to identify effective and efficient strategies for attracting graduates back to the college.¹³
- Secure technical support and resources to strengthen the use of social media for outreach to Hostos alumni.
- Secure funds for alumni staff development activities and to update computers and printers.

 13 Note: The first draft of the survey has been completed and will be administered before the end of the 2014-15 academic year.

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Appendix A – Select Alumni Pilot Survey Results

A pilot survey conducted at the most recent 127 candidates completed graduation orientation. Members of the group were asked 18 questions pertaining to satisfaction with their college degrees, affinity to the college and their chosen fields, and the quality of education offered by Hostos. They were also asked to rate key factors in their success at Hostos.





