

COMMUNITY REPORT

ISSUE 3 | SUMMER 2023
ACADEMIC YEAR 2022–23

HCC: Resilient and Resolute in our Mission



Can Any Beauty in the World Match This? By Hafiz, c.1320-1389

When the sun within speaks, when love
reaches out its hand and places it upon
another,

any power the stars and planets might have upon us,
any fears you can muster can become so rightfully
insignificant.

What one heart can do for another heart, is there any
beauty in the world that can match this?

Brotherhood, sisterhood, humanity becomes the joy and
the emancipation.

Dear Hostos Family and Friends,

It is with joy, gratitude and hope that I write these brief words introducing our third annual community report. It is our hope to record, in however small a way, some of the highlights of what has been a remarkable year of recovery and re-opening of our doors to offer a healthier and more engaging academic life for us all.

The year recorded significant progress in our fall to spring retention as well as a growth in enrollment during the spring. Life on campus has come back in important and generous ways, assuring re-connection for many, and a larger student, faculty and staff presence on campus. These vibrant pictures speak volumes about a life force and a generous community spirit, and the narrative therein elucidates the meaning of our images and the extent of our progress. Our new Hostos Strategic Plan 2023–2028 provides pathways for us as we continue to move forward post-pandemic and beyond, and we ensure, with the support of so many, that equity, diversity, inclusion and social justice thrive in the present and future of our beloved Eugenio María de Hostos Community College.

Mil gracias y bendiciones,

Daisy Cocco De Filippis, Ph.D.

President

Eugenio María de Hostos Community College, CUNY



EMERGING FROM THE PANDEMIC

After a devastating pandemic that kept us apart, the College community emerged ready and eager to fully reengage in campus life for the first time in over two years and celebrate our 55th anniversary.

The academic year commenced with a welcome back barbeque held in neighboring Evelina Antonetty Park and continued with celebrations of our diverse community during Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Dominican Heritage Month, Women's History Month, Asian and Asian-American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, and more.

Hostos kicked off the Spring 2023 semester and celebrated its 55th anniversary with the grand reopening of the Hostos Café. The revitalized space is now open to the campus, serving delicious food prepared by A La Carte Menu Services, Monday through Friday. The Café is once again a place where we can all commune to break bread or simply take a break.

The College also presented the third annual Black at Hostos Town Hall Series, titled "We're on the Battlefield: Black Resistance in the Courts, in the Workplace, and in the Classroom." The series launched with "The Supreme Court's Relentless Battle Against Racial Progress," a talk with Mark Joseph Stern, Senior writer at Slate, and concluded with "Black Resistance in the Workplace," a discussion with Amazon Labor Union (ALU) co-founders Jordan Flowers and Gerald Bryson.

We also held the inaugural Hostos Student Symposium, a celebration of our students' work in various fields and featured a keynote address by Dr. Roosevelt Montás from Columbia University. Throughout the day, more than 80 scholars — alongside their mentors — presented their research and projects through panel and poster sessions, and some performed scenes from plays and poetry readings. The inspiring event concluded with "Music Connects Us," an artistic gathering that highlighted the relationship between music and cultural heritage via the sharing of personal essays submitted by our magnificent students.

MS. MACKENZIE SCOTT'S GIFT: PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVES:

We're proud to confirm that several MacKenzie Scott Gift-funded initiatives and programs were launched this academic year, and we're seeing their immense impact. For instance, scholars Maria Vasquez-Guillen, Andrea Vasquez-Guillen, and Hawa Abraham were selected to the inaugural cohort of the NextGen Public Health Scholars 2+2+2 Program — and their achievements were highlighted by WPIX 11, WABC News, and Telemundo! The program partners Hostos Community College

with the Columbia University School of General Studies and the Columbia Mailman School of Public Health's Department of Epidemiology to pursue a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Public Health or of Science at Columbia.

Additionally, this spring the College officially opened the doors to the Hostos Research Center (HRC), funded by the Ms. Mackenzie Scott Gift, to provide opportunities for intellectual growth and socio-economic mobility. We also hosted the annual Research Day, an opportunity for faculty members to share their findings with the College community. The event celebrated work across disciplines and showed the high-quality work our educators do tirelessly.

The Educating for Diversity initiative has provided funding support for the College's numerous cultural events and celebrations, including "Veladas Hostosianas / Hostos Culture Talks," the Black at Hostos series, lectures, and forums that promote social justice, racial equity, diversity and inclusion.

Ms. MacKenzie Scott's Gift: President's Initiatives has also shined a light on the resiliency of our students through key events, such as the President's Recognition Tea in Honor of Women's History Month and the President's Recognition Barbeque in Honor of Student Resiliency. At these gatherings, we honored students who have overcome major challenges while maintaining excellent academic standing. This academic year's President's Initiatives series concluded with the Shine Your Light Poetry Celebration Day, a get-together of Hostos poets, who inspired us all with their powerful words.

INVESTING IN OUR STUDENTS

Hostos has remained steadfast in its efforts to invest in our students and their futures.

For example, the establishment of the Hostos Research Center will help foster a culture of collaborative research and grants development to enhance students' professional experiences. The HRC is aligned with Hostos' mission to provide opportunities for intellectual growth, socio-economic mobility, and develop the skills needed for lifelong learning and success.

We received a \$2.86 million Title V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institution (DHSI) grant from the U.S. Department of Education, which provides grants to assist HSIs expand educational opportunities to improve student access, retention, and graduation rates.

The Hostos Community College Foundation was awarded \$150,000 from Libra Group Social Responsibility (LSR) to support the Hostos Family Empowerment Program (FEP). The latter supports student-parents through referrals to external organizations and internally donated items, in addition to



offering structured advising, counseling, and community-building. The new two-year grant from LSR will assist FEP in providing more direct assistance, helping students to afford childcare, books, MetroCards, and more. Additionally, Libra sponsored a group of students on a trip to Washington, D.C. this spring to visit cultural sites and meet with executives and staff at Libra Group's D.C. office.

Furthermore, the Foundation raised \$130,000 for student scholarships during its 16th Annual Scholarship Fund Golf Outing Classic in October and more than \$425,000 at the 55th Anniversary Gala in April — surpassing their goal! — to further bolster financial support for students.

The Hostos Division of Continuing Education & Workforce Development (CEWD) was awarded a three-year \$3 million Health Careers Opportunity Program grant from the U.S. Department of Health to support its Community Health Worker Training Program. Additionally, Hostos received \$700,007 as part of a Strengthening Community Colleges (SCC) grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The four-year initiative will build the capacity of CUNY community colleges to collaborate with employers and the public workforce development system to meet local and regional labor market demand for a skilled workforce.

REBOUNDED ENROLLMENT

Enrollment at Hostos suffered an understandable decrease in the wake of COVID-19. We are happy to note that, as the worst effects of the pandemic have faded, life in New York City and its environs is slowly but surely returning to pre-pandemic conditions — and this holds true for Hostos and the CUNY system.

The CUNY Reconnect Program at Hostos has played a major role in rebounding enrollment. This University-wide program seeks to re-engage New Yorkers who have earned credits and could return to finish their degrees. Conceived originally by NYC Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, the program has facilitated the return to Hostos of nearly 1,000 students. NYC Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget proposal includes \$5.8 million support for the CUNY Reconnect program for the 2023–2024 academic year.

We are heartened to report that enrollment at Hostos is up by approximately 7.3%. Retention rates also show improvement; retention of students from Fall 2022 to Spring 2023 is up 8.3%, higher than every prior year, including 2017.

This spring, we've seen significant gains in overall enrollment and the number of Full Time Equivalency (FTEs) enrolled at Hostos: more students are enrolled, and students are attempting more credits than they did in Spring 2021 and 2022.

Another very positive indicator is the Fall-to-Spring (aka one-semester) retention of Fall 2022 first-time, full-time freshmen (FTFTF). Thanks to the sterling efforts by Student Development and Enrollment Management (SDEM) and the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) coaches, advisors, staff, and faculty, Fall 2022 FTFTF have been retained at a rate of 78.6%, which is higher than it has been the past two years, and is higher even than pre-pandemic numbers. We trust that, through conscientious effort, these numbers will continue to increase.

NEW REALITIES — NEW MODALITIES

The global pandemic transformed how we carry out our duties and responsibilities. Practically no aspect of contemporary life was left untouched. Many institutions of learning were particularly hard hit. Educators and administrators dealt with issues of reach and effectiveness on a daily basis.

However, one thing is certain given the challenges we faced: the Hostos community pulled together to make the transition from in-person learning to the distance variety as smooth as possible. As time passed and familiarity with the technical elements increased, smoother, more effective instruction became the standard. Today, Hostos students may choose to pursue their courses in-person, virtually, or in a hybrid mix.

The Office of Academic Affairs has been working with departmental chairs to begin to offer the opportunity to take classes online; all courses and class materials are available to enrolled students at any time of the day or night, easily accommodating learners' professional, familial, and personal obligations. Flexibility is a form of accessibility — one of the College's primary goals. As with in-person and hybrid classes, all asynchronous courses offered will transfer to four-year colleges within CUNY, and online degree-seekers will have access to all the support services that in-person students get.

Hostos has never been afraid to embrace new technology. It's no coincidence that the College houses a cutting-edge Digital Design and Animation program or that 2021 saw the founding of a Computer Science A.S. program, from which a first cohort graduated this year. Our programs address our innovative responses to the ever-evolving technological times. A Cybersecurity program is scheduled to begin next semester, thanks to a grant from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and Microsoft. And a Cybersecurity Summit was held in June, organized with the Community Advisory Council Chair, Elias Alcantara, to discuss how to align the curriculum with the needs of the burgeoning industry



RESILIENT AND RESOLUTE



THE 2023–2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

Beginning in 2022, Hostos sought input from its students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders in creating its new Strategic Plan (SP). The goal, as always, is to represent the wealth, richness, and diversity of the communities of which the College is a part. An effective strategic plan must balance the practical with the academic, the demands of the academy with the demands of day-to-day living. Fostering student success is what Hostos is all about, and after much deliberation, the SP's Steering Committee agreed on the creation of six overarching goals for the College:

- Equitable access to higher education for our diverse student population.
- Build a culture of justice, diversity, equality, and inclusion
- Promote English and math learning
- Academic programs that balance intellectual growth and workforce preparedness
- Increase student socio-economic mobility
- Champion social justice in the South Bronx

Student success is not merely a question of applying individual skills, talents or gifts. Student outcomes are also impacted by the lingering effects of racial, gender and class inequality, with which the residents of the South Bronx are too familiar.

This is why we place such importance on Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as we calibrate our efforts for the greatest amount of student success. We are proud to be an integral part of the borough, and we fight for our students, their families, and friends. We believe we all deserve the opportunity to succeed.

Inspired by such prophetic figures as Don Eugenio María de Hostos, the Puerto Rican educator/activist whose name we so proudly bear, and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we seek to offer our students the knowledge and skills they need to fulfill their potential and make their mark on the world so they can change it.

