

Bridging the Colleges:
A Faculty Development Seminar for Community and Senior
College Faculty, Building Bridges for General Education Across
the Curriculum
Bronx Community College, Hostos Community College, and
Lehman College
CUNY

Report on the Second Year, 2006-2007

*Robert Whittaker
September 14, 2007*

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Introduction

In completing its second year and preparing for its third, the Bridging the Colleges Seminar has benefited from contributions by a variety of participants, some active, some tacit. First of all, the Seminar is the creation of its participants, who, gently guided by its leaders, ultimately create the substance and legacy of the Seminar's work. The continuing health, robust energy, optimism and dedication of CUNY faculty members in the Bronx from BCC, Hostos and Lehman are what makes the Seminar grow. Also, the support of the campus administrations of the colleges – of Nadine Posner, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs at BCC, of Daisy De Filippis, Provost at Hostos, and of Bill Tramontano, Acting Provost at Lehman – and their active participation, including visiting the Seminar, has helped us immeasurably. Finally, the CUNY Office of Undergraduate Education and its Dean, Judith Summerfield, provided the initial inspiration for this undertaking in conversations at the University's General Education Forum, and her office has provided the material support that has made this unique undertaking possible.

The Seminar also benefits from a legacy of creative, cooperative ideas and traditions that come from the Looking Both Ways Project at CUNY and most directly from the efforts of three individuals who brought the Seminar from the drawing board into actual sessions: Linda Hirsch of Hostos, Sondra Pearl of Lehman, and Marcie Wolfe, also of Lehman. The importance of visiting colleagues' classrooms on other campuses together

with practical lessons of how this can best be done – these are what Linda, Sondra and Marcie brought from LBW as they created the structure for Bridging the Colleges.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the energy, wisdom, insight and good cheer of Linda Hirsch, who was my teacher in sharing with me the leadership of the Seminar. For her patience and generosity of spirit I am very grateful.

--Robert Whittaker

1. Objectives and Goals

The BTC Seminars serve several objectives in the area of general education, faculty development, and institutional structure and change. The Seminars study the nature of general education curricula and teaching at the CUNY colleges in the Bronx. They develop the participants' awareness of teaching practices and problems through shared classroom experiences. And they aim to improve the way in which individual CUNY campuses and faculty (in the Bronx) cooperate to facilitate the experiences of the students we share.

A number of specific goals have emerged from these general objectives:

- to clarify the general education curricula, criteria and strategies of each campus; to investigate specific qualities of academic literacy, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning as they are taught or modeled by the different faculty members; to understand how each campus presents and teaches these skills and perspectives of the liberal arts; and to examine the experience of transfer students moving within CUNY;
- to compare students and teaching methods or techniques between campuses and between levels of instruction; to generate interest in curricular change to accommodate the needs of students as they move from one campus to another; to establish practical understanding of the differences between lower division and upper division students, both within and across campuses;
- to establish contacts and points of understanding between faculty on different campuses; to build a network of faculty aware of the CUNY context of the students as they progress through the University; to encourage faculty presentations and research on shared concerns of teaching and learning; and to develop a strong identity of shared CUNY curricular policies and practices in general education and the disciplines.

A description of the Seminar, its goals and procedures can be found on the Lehman home page under Academic Affairs, General Education:

<http://www.lehman.edu/lehman/programs/generaledu/> - Bridging the Colleges Project.

2. General Structure

The Seminar comprised twelve participants – four from each of the colleges (BCC, Hostos, Lehman) – and two leaders (Linda Hirsch, Hostos, and Robert Whittaker, Lehman). It met monthly, October through May, except January, and it presented results of its work at the CUNY Gen Ed Conference in Queens in May. A planning group coordinated and planned Seminar activities: the two leaders plus Marcie Wolfe, Lehman (one of the originators of the Seminar), and a representative from BCC, Susan Amper.

Much of the structure, style and techniques of the Seminar derived from experiences and results of work by the Looking Both Ways Project (<http://www.lbw.cuny.edu/home.html>) and, specifically, the work of Linda Hirsch, Sondra Perl (Seminar leader last year) and Marcie Wolfe. This intellectual and pedagogical heritage has proven invaluable in guiding the work of the BTC Seminar.

3. Selection Process

The selection of candidates was accomplished by the BTC Planning Group, joined later by a fourth member chosen from among the Bronx Community College participants (once they were identified), Susan Amper. Each of the three campuses distributed a call for participants in the BTC Seminar, using a common informational announcement and application form. (See Appendix I.) Linda Hirsch and Robert Whittaker reviewed the applicants from Hostos and Lehman; the Bronx Community College applicants were reviewed and recommended by Nadine Posner, Asst. Dean of Academic Affairs at BCC.

There were several more candidates than available positions: the applications were evaluated on the basis of field or specialization. Candidates were selected with the intention of providing matched disciplines or fields across the Bronx CUNY campuses so that participants could better understand the transition process. Because the Seminar's work culminates in shared classroom visits, it succeeds best when the participants can share teaching experiences within similar fields.

The following participants were selected:

Susan Amper	English	BCC
Marc Barnhill	English	BCC
Craig Bernardini	English	Hostos
Patricia Cockram	English/LEH	Lehman
David Fletcher	MSE	Lehman
Patricia Frenz-Belkin	Language	Hostos

David Gordon	History	BCC
Elhum Haghghat	Sociology	Lehman
Cynthia Jones	English/History	Hostos
Ellen Mareneck	Speech/Drama	BCC
Maria Miranda	Humanities /Spanish	Hostos
Zelda Newman	Languages/LEH	Lehman

4. Seminar Sessions and Reports

The Seminar held seven meetings, two each at Lehman, Hostos and BCC, with a final meeting in the magnificent central hall of the BCC Library: October 16, November 13, December 11, February 5, March 12, April 16, and May 14. The Gen Ed Conference was held on May 4. A statement of guiding questions and expectations described the Seminar’s work initially (see Appendix II).

The Seminar sessions comprised discussions of common concerns, of materials distributed for study and comment, of shared experiences and observations during the joint classroom visits.

Session I: Academic Experiences

After introductions and a history of the BTC project and its objectives, the Seminar participants shared their academic experiences both as students and faculty. The experiences of students on each campus were compared.

Session II: Academic Literacy

The Seminar discussed three assigned readings (Courage, “Interaction of Public and Private Literacies”; Garger “Bronx Syndrome”; Shaugnnessy, “Introduction” to *Errors and Expectations*). The session also shared and responded to examples of student writing brought by participants.

Session III: ‘College-Level’ Writing and General Education

Seminar participants from last year joined the current session for an opening discussion of the Seminar’s objectives and results. The Seminar shared results of an informal survey of what each campus understands about General Education, then focused on the nature of college-level writing and how to define it, as informed by their reading of Sullivan, “What is ‘College-Level’ Writing?” The process of selecting shared-classroom-visit teams began.

Session IV: Liberal Education and Planning Visits

Participants shared impressions of assigned readings on Gen Ed and liberal education (Cronon, “Only Connect”; Flannery, “Liberal Arts & Liberal Education”; Freeland, “The Third Way”; Whittaker, “General Education vs. Education Generally”). The Seminar watched an LBW presentation on classroom visits and discussed a visitation protocol (see Appendix III for the list of teams and a copy of the protocol).

Session V: The Visits and Teaching Practices

Returning after experiencing visits to colleagues’ classrooms, the teams analyzed their reactions in search of common patterns or threads, keeping in mind the Seminar’s presentation at the Gen Ed Conference. Discussion focused on what seemed unusual or unexpected across classrooms. The Seminar then discussed the relevance of an article by Huber and Hutchings, “The Advancement of Learning: Building a Teaching Commons.” Each of the visit-teams produced a draft of a presentation topic.

Session VI: Making Learning Visible in: SoTL

The Seminar focused on preparation for the Gen Ed Conference, first by discussing in teams the concept of making “visible” the learning that takes place in courses. The group discussed an article by Bass, “The Scholarship of Teaching: What’s the Problem?” in conjunction with the essay on a teaching commons. Each team presented results of their visitations.

Gen Ed Conference: Summary Presentations

The Seminar’s presentation at the Gen Ed Conference at Queens College, May 4th, comprised reports by four teams on the results of their experiences.

Team 1: Marc Barnhill (BCC), Craig Bernadini (Hostos), Elhum Haghightat (Lehman), “Negotiated Spaces” (Craig)

Team 2: David Gordon (BCC), Cynthia Jones (Hostos), David Fletcher (Lehman), "Learning Across CUNY - How Faculty from Hostos CC, Bronx CC, and Lehman College Became Instructors for Each Other" (David & David)

Team 3: Ellen Mareneck (BCC), Maria Miranda (Hostos), Zelda Newman (Lehman),
"Too General and Not General Enough" (Ellen, Zelda)

Team 4: Susan Amper (BCC), Patricia Frenz-Belkin (Hostos), Patricia Cockram (Lehman), “Where Are They Now?”

A copy of the session program is in Appendix IV.

Concluding Session: Reflections

The “graduation” ceremony for the Seminar combined a celebratory reflection on the achievements of the past year with a discussion of recommendations for college and university policies. The results are included in the Summary Recommendations below.

Extraordinary Session: Tea with Executive Vice Chancellor Selma Botman

On February 28 the members of the BTC Seminar were invited to tea and a discussion with Selma Botman. The conversations reflected both the concerns of the Seminar with transfer students as well as basic skills testing and preparation in reading and writing. The possibilities and limitations of shared teaching across CUNY campuses also received some comment.

5. Summary Evaluations and Recommendations

Reactions and recommendations from the members of the BTC Seminar were elicited through questions about the Seminar itself (a copy of the questionnaire is Appendix V).

Reactions to the Seminar itself highlighted a number of shared values:

- the importance of networking among the faculty from different campuses;
- dismantling a number of stereotypes about community and senior colleges;
- study of the nature and goals of Gen Ed Programs as realized in each college;
- insights into teaching derived from visiting classes on other campuses;
- seeing remarkable similarities among students on the different campuses – a CUNY-ness, perhaps;
- sharing of the participants' learning as well as their teaching; and
- understanding how similar are many of the teaching challenges we face.

There were a number of suggestions for improvement of the BTC Seminar itself, including the following recommendations:

- That the number of visits to one another's classes be increased;
- That students be involved in the activities of the seminar;
- That the format of team presentations be changed to a round-table format for the Gen Ed Conference;
- More specific analysis of student skills and expected levels of competency across the colleges;
- More reading about students' transition from two to four-year institutions; and
- Create a specific focus for each year of the Seminar;

Finally, the Seminar participants made a number of suggestions for system-wide change in CUNY:

- Reduce unnecessary complications facing students as they transfer from one college to another;
- Establish liaisons among colleges to facilitate inter-campus cooperation in teaching and learning;
- Concentrate on making the process of transfer and transition from campus to campus a more friendly, supportive one; and
- Increase the opportunities for team teaching across campuses.

Announcing

BRIDGING THE COLLEGES

A Faculty Development Seminar for

Community and Senior College Faculty in the Bronx

What are the academic literacies students need to succeed at CUNY?

What are the broad purposes of courses in the General Education curriculum?

How can collaboration among faculty in the CUNY Bronx schools smooth the transition from community to senior college?

What can we learn from visiting each other's classrooms?

What can this collaboration teach us about the values we bring to our classrooms, the differences in our disciplines, and the ways we teach?

Join 12 CUNY faculty in a new initiative, *Bridging the Colleges*, during the 2006-2007 academic year. Explore the above questions in an interdisciplinary, inquiry-based seminar in which we examine theories and practices related to literacy development across the curriculum and design curriculum projects with colleagues from sister schools.

Schedule:

4-7 PM on the following Mondays:

October 16, November 13, December 11, February 5, March 12, April 16

(location will rotate)

May 14: Final Presentation

Seminar leaders:

Professor Linda Hirsch, Hostos & Professor Robert Whittaker, Lehman

Stipend: \$1,500.00

Open to all full-time faculty at Bronx Community College, Hostos Community College, and Lehman College. Experience in Writing across the Curriculum and/or Gen Ed courses preferred.

Applications (attached) due by September 25, 2006

For a fuller description of *Bridging the Colleges*, go to http://www.lehman.edu/lehman/programs/generaledu/bridging_the_colleges.html

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BRIDGING THE COLLEGES

A Faculty Development Seminar for
Community and Senior College Faculty in the Bronx

A. PERSONAL INFORMATION – PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY

Name: _____

Home address: _____

Department: _____

School
address: _____

Home phone: _____ School phone: _____

E-mail address: _____
How often do you check your e-mail? _____

What courses/subjects do you teach? _____

Number of years teaching _____ Number of years teaching at
CUNY _____

Rank _____

B. PERSONAL STATEMENT

On a separate sheet of paper, please type your responses to the following questions (one page only):

1. Have you been involved in WAC or in Gen Ed on your campus? If so, in what ways?
2. What faculty development (if any) have you participated in at the college or elsewhere? Please describe.
3. Why are you interested in this project? What questions do you have about the community college-senior college continuum?

LEHMAN FACULTY: Return your completed application to Prof. Robert Whittaker - rwhittaker@rusinc.net. (Email preferred: otherwise, to the Journalism, Communications and Theatre Department, Carman 259.)

Application Deadline: Friday, September 25, 2006

BRIDGING THE COLLEGES

A Professional Development Seminar for
Community and Senior College Faculty in the Bronx

Guiding Questions:

What are the academic literacies students need to succeed at CUNY?

What are the broad purposes of courses in the General Education curriculum?

How can collaboration among faculty in the CUNY Bronx schools smooth the transition from community to senior college?

What can we learn from visiting each other's classrooms?

What can this collaboration teach us about the values we bring to our classrooms, the differences in our disciplines, and the ways we teach?

General Expectations:

Six seminar meetings between October-April, final meeting in May

Intervisitations based on your community and senior college team

An inquiry project that furthers our understanding of one or more of the above questions

Dates and Locations:

October 16, November 13 – Lehman

December 11, February 5 – Hostos

March 12, April 16 – BCC

May 14: Presentation of projects – location to be set.

Seminar leaders:

Professor Linda Hirsch, Hostos & Professor Robert Whittaker, Lehman

BCC liaison: Professor Susan Amper

Appendix III

Bridging the Colleges: Teams for 2006-2007

Team\School	<i>BCC</i>	<i>Hostos</i>	<i>Lehman</i>
1	Marc Barnhill	Craig Bernadini	Elhum Haghghat
2	David Gordon	Cynthia Jones	David Fletcher
3	Ellen Mareneck	Maria Miranda	Zelda Newman
4	Susan Amper	Patricia Frenz-Belkin	Patricia Cockram

Bridging the Colleges Intervisitation Protocol / Report

An intervisitation is NOT an evaluation

It is a record of **your** thinking in response to being invited to visit a colleague's institution and classroom

Your final report can take whatever form you deem most appropriate

Your report to the BTC Seminar (and Gen Ed Conference, perhaps) might include:

- ~ the question your group is focusing on
- ~ a narrative of what you each saw and heard
- ~ a "portrait" of the class you visited
- ~ a discussion of something that surprised you
- ~ a reflection on an insight you've gained

The final report is about *you* and *your perceptions* not about the competence or teaching skill of the person you are visiting.

Prior to the visit:

Think about the specific questions you have regarding your colleague's institution.

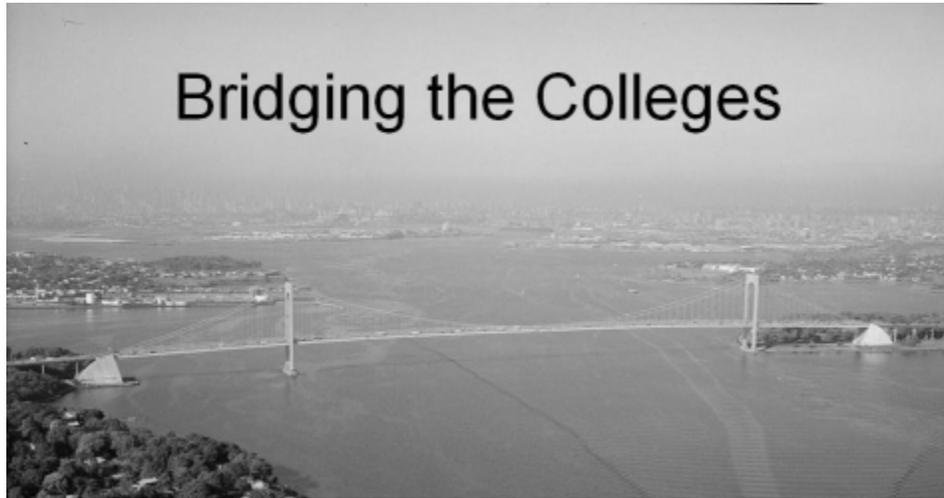
- What do you want to know?
- What are your expectations about the school?
 - About the students?
 - About the faculty member?
 - About what you might see in the classroom?

During and After:

Think about the following:

- What surprised you during your visit?
- What did visiting another college highlight about your own school?
- How did seeing another class affect the way you think about your own class?
- How was academic literacy being addressed/represented? Explain.
- What new ways of thinking about our collective enterprise did you leave with?

With thanks to Looking Both Ways Professional Development Seminars & Prof. Peter Gray, Queensborough Community College, The City University of New York



Faculty Development Seminar
for Community and Senior College Faculty, Building Bridges
for General Education Across the Curriculum

2007-2008

Participants

Susan Amper	English	BCC
Marc Barnhill	English	BCC
Craig Bernardini	English	Hostos
Patricia Cockram	English/LEH	Lehman
David Fletcher	MSE	Lehman
Patricia Frenz-Belkin	Language	Hostos
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Elhum Haghghat	Sociology	Lehman
Cynthia Jones	English/History	Hostos
Ellen Mareneck	Speech/Drama	BCC
Maria Miranda	Humanities /Spanish	Hostos
Zelda Newman	Languages/LEH	Lehman

Leaders
Linda Hirsch, English, Hostos
Robert Whittaker, Journalism, Lehman

The 3rd Annual CUNY
General Education Conference
Queens College

Session I
10:30-11:30

Presentations

Team 1: Marc Barnhill (BCC), Craig Bernadini (Hostos),
Elhum Haghighat (Lehman),

"Negotiated Spaces" (Craig)

Team 2: David Gordon (BCC), Cynthia Jones (Hostos), David
Fletcher (Lehman),

**"Learning Across CUNY - How Faculty from Hostos CC,
Bronx CC, and Lehman College Became Instructors for
Each Other" (David & David)**

Team 3: Ellen Mareneck (BCC), Maria Miranda (Hostos),
Zelda Newman (Lehman),

"Too General and Not General Enough" (Ellen, Zelda)

Team 4: Susan Amper (BCC), Patricia Frenz-Belkin (Hostos),
Patricia Cockram (Lehman),

"Where Do We Go? How Do We Get There?"

Appendix V:

Bridging the Colleges Evaluation
2006-2007

1. Please describe why you applied to BTC. Were your expectations met? If so, in what ways? If not what was missing?
2. Please think about the ways BTC surprised you. What did you learn that you did not expect to learn? Did BTC exceed your expectations in any way? If so, how?
3. What was best about the BTC seminars? Please elaborate.
4. What would you have liked to see more of? What would you like to add? What would you like to see changed?
5. How has BTC enlarged your understanding of General Education? Of teaching and learning?
6. What, if anything, have you learned about the transition from community to senior college at CUNY?
7. What is the single most important thing you are taking away with you from this seminar?
8. Would you recommend participation in BTC to other faculty on your campus? Why or why not? Are there faculty you know whom you think we should invite? If so, please give us their names.
9. Is there anything else you want to say to us?

Thanks again for your time and participation.

Rob and Linda