

May 2021

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# BAY RIDGE *Courier*

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## EDUCATION PROFILE

### Community Colleges can make a BIG difference in NYC's Economic Recovery

BY DR. CLAUDIA V. SCHRADER

The loss we have experienced in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic is immeasurable. Many of us lost loved ones and others of us, hope. Some of our neighbors were at risk of losing their homes; businesses were shuttered (some now permanently); and over 630,000 New Yorkers found themselves unemployed, which all resulted in a devastating impact on the city's economy. As efforts to halt the spread of COVID took root and the availability of vaccines showed promise, our thoughts began to turn to the future and what lay ahead.

While much is underway to maintain, revive, and stimulate the city's economy with legislation to close the deficit, fund schools, assist businesses, and protect New Yorkers in need, more must be done. Enter community colleges, what Dr. Jill Biden, First Lady of the United States and community college educator, has qualified as the "most powerful engine

of prosperity." As Brooklyn's only community college, Kingsborough stands to make that BIG difference for Brooklyn and beyond.

At Kingsborough, and starting with our comprehensive continuing education and workforce development programs, we provide pathways that begin with credentialing for youth, displaced and incumbent workers to upgrade skills and earn additional credentials to matriculating students earning a college degree. KCC students, many of whom are non-traditional or adult learners, already come to our classrooms with extensive work and life experiences. Combined with the solid liberal arts foundation and comprehensive preparation in many high need and technical fields, KCC's offerings are ideally suited to address workforce needs. Partnerships with industries provide students with the opportunity for hands-on learning, apprenticeship, and internship experiences.



Kingsborough maritime students train aboard the CUNY 1, floating classroom.

Having these close relationships ensures that the curriculum being taught to students is relevant to the careers students will enter, whether they seek immediate employment or plan to join in the next few years. These relationships also serve industry needs by creating a direct pipeline of skilled employees from educational institutions to a company/organization. We know that an industry-informed curriculum leads to better outcomes for learners, so they are prepared for immediate and gainful employment or are better informed to continue toward advanced

educational outcomes. For employers, strong relationships create pipelines to a skilled and eager workforce. A full-time student can typically complete a degree in two to three years or an industry-recognized certificate in one year or less, making community college students a quick return on investment.

Although tuition at community college is significantly lower than at a four-year college, many of our students have difficulty paying for college. Consequently, many students juggle multiple jobs to cover the cost, opt for part-time study, which lengthens the time to earning a degree or a credential, or oftentimes they opt out altogether. This has a deleterious effect on high-need industries and the workforce that is in dire need of skilled workers.

Kingsborough is committed to supporting students. Each year, we host a gala to raise vital funds to provide financial assistance and

scholarships for students. For this year's gala, we are going BIG for our Brooklyn, for our students, and for our future workforce with a focus on celebrating the economic and entrepreneurial spirit of the borough. We are excited to honor the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce; KCC alum and entrepreneur Iris Clarke; former president of Hostos Community College and long-serving KCC professor and administrator Dr. David Gomez; and chair of the KCC Department of Biology Dr. Mary Dawson.

I invite you to go BIG with us on June 24. Let's celebrate the BIG difference Brooklyn's Only Community College makes and our students who, with your support, will do great for our economy and in the world.

*Dr. Claudia V. Schrader, president of Kingsborough Community College. For more information on the "We Go BIG For Brooklyn Gala 2021" visit the College's virtual gala website at [kbcc.cuny.edu/virtualgala](http://kbcc.cuny.edu/virtualgala).*

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