

NCC 101: ENHANCING THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE



Photography by William Beker

Professor Stella Fox (left) leads a discussion group during a recent NCC 101 class.

Starting college can be an exciting but at times overwhelming experience. Like travelers visiting another country for the first time, freshmen quickly discover that they are in new territory, with new skills to be mastered, new customs to be observed and even new rules to be learned.

Fortunately, at Nassau Community College, incoming freshmen have an opportunity to take a course intended to help them become familiar with the College environment. NCC 101: The College Experience, a one-credit general elective open to all freshmen, eases students' transition to college by providing important information about Nassau, assistance in understanding the goals and expectations of higher education and advice on putting their best foot forward. NCC 101—according to Professors Richard Conway, Stella Fox and Jan

Robbins, the program's co-coordinators—is a cornerstone of the College's new Center for Academic Success. Sessions tend to be interactive, with students encouraged to work in small groups, to write weekly letters and to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses as students. Freshmen are also exposed to the College's many resources—through presentations by guest speakers about academic opportunities (e.g., internships), visits to campus services and information about extracurricular activities.

"One of our goals is to enhance the students' sense of belonging," explains Professor Fox. "NCC 101 offers instructors a unique opportunity to mentor students and help them connect to the College, the faculty, and their peers."

Asked prior to taking the course what they hope to gain from NCC 101, students have offered a variety of responses. "I

would like to learn how to handle major assignments if they are given at the same time by different teachers," noted one student. Other responses have included: "to be more confident about school," "to manage work and school" and "to learn about the different options at NCC and classes I can take next year."

In fact, NCC 101 covers everything from learning styles and time management to degree requirements and the ins and outs of advisement and academic planning. In addition, NCC 101 professors encourage students to utilize campus resources, such as the Career Center, the Library and the Writing Center.

Many students are surprised to learn about all that Nassau has to offer. "NCC 101 gives you tips on test taking, studying and time management," said Kenneth Jones,



Five years ago, *Nexus* published an article entitled *Six Myths About Community Colleges*. Given the changing times, a new generation of students and different trends in the marketplace, I thought it would be useful to revisit these myths for our readers and supporters in 2008.

The mission of Nassau Community College hasn't changed. We are a constituent member of the State University of New York (SUNY) system; a comprehensive, full-opportunity institution of higher education. All who can benefit from our resources have the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills and pursue the goal of lifelong learning. The College is dedicated to high quality, low cost education and career preparation to meet the needs and interests of the community we serve. We are committed to academic excellence and the dignity and worth of the individual. Nearly 70 percent of our graduates go on to four-year institutions to complete their baccalaureate degrees, a statistic that fills us with great pride.

Myth #1: We are a community college. The perception is that because we are a local institution with the words "community college" in our name that we are not very good.

Response: There are 1,195 community colleges in the United States with an enrollment of 11.5 million students, according to the American Association

for Community Colleges. Within the SUNY system, which has 427,398 students overall, 214,129 are enrolled in community colleges. At Nassau Community College, the largest single-campus community college in the SUNY system, nearly 22,000 full- and part-time students attend. The most commonly heard phrase mentioned by students from Nassau who transferred to four-year institutions is "some of the best professors ever were those I had while a student at Nassau." Nassau Community College produces over 3,000 graduates annually and has more than 115,000 alumni.

Myth #2: A degree from Nassau Community College isn't as good as a university degree.

Response: Tens of thousands of college students begin their career at a community college. Nationally, 555,000 associate degrees and 295,000 certificates are awarded annually. Between 65 and 70 percent of our graduates successfully transfer to four-year institutions such as Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Hofstra, Stony Brook, Adelphi University, C.W. Post, and countless others.

NASSAU IS COMMITTED TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Myth #3: The people who go to Nassau Community College are the ones who can't get in anywhere else.

Response: While it is the policy and mission of the College to maintain open admissions, the truth is that all sorts of people attend Nassau. In fact, Nassau is the first choice of many students. A large percentage of our entering students have grade point averages over 3.0. We offer honors programs, business courses, calculus, computer technology, a comprehensive liberal arts program and much more. Our Allied Health program is second to none. Many area hospitals and businesses rely on our graduates to fill needed positions. In fact, a good GPA from Nassau is, in many instances, a better credential than one's high school rank or ACT or SAT score.

Myth #4: Nassau Community College's faculty isn't the same as faculty at four-year schools.

Response: No, they are not the same. All faculty at Nassau teach all the time. Students are taught by faculty who care for them personally and about how and what they learn. All of our faculty have a master's degree and nearly 40 percent of them have a Ph.D. or other terminal degree. Plus, students have the added advantage of having no more than 21 fellow students, on average, in a class. All of this promotes a quality education.

Myth #5: The courses don't transfer.

Response: Our credits transfer. That's what they are designed for, in cooperation with the universities in New York State. In fact, we have articulation agreements with state colleges and universities, and many private colleges and universities, that will take Nassau's associate degree credits with no strings attached. If a student follows one of our nearly 70 degree transfer credit programs and maintains a grade of C or better, virtually every required course taken will be accepted at a SUNY institution, as well as most private schools.

Myth #6: Community colleges are cheap, so they can't be good. You get what you pay for.

Response: Cheap, no. With a tuition of \$3,434 per year, affordable—definitely. Nassau offers an exceptional education, as well as a comprehensive sports program for both men and women, including basketball, soccer, tennis and track. Our football team is nationally ranked and we have fielded championship teams in many sports, most recently lacrosse and wrestling (see article on page three). Newsmaker quality speakers and entertainers regularly appear on the campus, enhancing our cultural program. Over 65 student clubs and organizations bring programs to our students designed to enrich their College and life experience. Students at Nassau don't pay for what they get—they get more than what they pay for. Nassau Community College is where success starts, and continues.

NCC WRESTLING TEAM WINS NATIONAL TITLE

NCC Wrestlers Pin the Competition

The scholar-athletes on the Nassau Community College wrestling team work very hard in the classroom and on the wrestling mat. All of that hard work has paid off. The team won the national championship for their division at the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) wrestling nationals in February in Rochester, Minnesota.

NCC students Chris Notte and Brandon Williamson also won national titles in their respective weight classes at the tournament. Silas Murray, Steve Perez, Andre Harrison and Dan Daddino were honored as All-Americans as well. Prof. Paul Schmidt—who teaches in the Criminal Justice Department and is the College's head wrestling coach—was a wrestler for Nassau in his student days. It's fitting that Schmidt, who was an All-



NCC Wrestling Coach Paul Schmidt (right) with wrestlers Brandon Williamson and Chris Notte.

American at Nassau himself, has brought so much success to the current team. His three knowledgeable assistants, Chris Edmond, Vougar Oroudjov and Sam Thomas, are an integral part of the team as well.

This year, Schmidt's peers voted him the NJCAA head coach of the year. Nassau's wrestling team, as well as its coaching staff, have certainly lived up to the College's slogan: they're where success starts...and continues.

—By Michael Fenrich

GIVING THE GIFT OF LIFE — THIRTEEN YEARS OF BLOOD DRIVES AT NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Nassau University Medical Center Nurse Janet St. John takes blood from donor Jessica Morisset during the March 13 blood drive.

Nassau Community College takes its mission of being a community resource seriously. One important part of that mission is NCC's annual blood drive program. Now in its thirteenth year, the College works in partnership with Nassau University Medical Center (NUMC) to hold six blood drives each year. Led by co-chairs Dr. Arthur Friedman and Barbara Vollmer, the Blood Drive Task Force coordinates these drives with the help of many other College volunteers. At the most recent drive, held on March 13, over 140 people from Nassau and the surrounding community took the time to come and donate blood. More than 115 units of blood were collected that day. Dr. Friedman estimates that since their inception, NCC/NUMC blood drives have collected over 8,000 units of blood. We are very grateful to the Blood Drive Task Force, all who have volunteered to work on the drives, and especially those kind individuals who donated blood.

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THE NEXT
BLOOD DRIVE, COMING ON MAY 14.
REMEMBER, BLOOD DONATION BENEFITS US ALL.

THE ACHILLES PROJECT AT NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM FOR "TWICE EXCEPTIONAL" STUDENTS

People have areas of strength and weakness when learning. Some, known as "twice exceptional" or "2e," have pronounced discrepancies between the two. In the spring of 2007, Nassau Community College introduced an innovative, special academic program, the Achilles Project, to meet the needs of these students.

The 2e Initiative Task Force, a college-wide collaborative committee consisting of faculty from different disciplines, the Reading/Basic Education Program and the Center for Students with Disabilities, as well as administrators, spearheaded the Achilles Project. Coordinated by Dr. Wendy Eisner, Professor of Psychology, the project is under the auspices of the Office for Academic Affairs and supervised by Carol Farber, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Instructional Operations and Special Programs.

According to Dr. Eisner, 2e students have talents in a wide range of areas, such as academics, visual or performing arts, creative writing, or athletics. In like manner, their difficulties may include learning disabilities, Asperger's Syndrome, ADD, ADHD, Tourette's syndrome or other health impairments. Some of these students also have an atypical learning style in which they use images rather than words.

"Many 2e students remain unidentified because their strengths and weaknesses mask each other," says Dr. Eisner. Thus, the Achilles Project uses a holistic approach to meet the needs of these students. It is designed to teach to students' strengths while supporting their areas of weakness. Each student's schedule varies according to his/her particular talents and deficits and has an academic as well as social-emotional component. Instruction is delivered by faculty who participate in faculty teaming and are trained in developing individualized instruction known as differentiated instruction. In addition, students have the option to do independent research projects and internships. They receive counseling to address their unique needs and career goals. Participation in the Achilles Club, an extra-curricular activity, provides immersion in social skills, peer mentoring, modes of addressing stress management, and field trips, community service and other activities to enhance self-awareness and self-expression.

Eligibility for participation in the Achilles Project is determined through reviewing demonstrated areas of strength and weakness and the significant discrepancies between them. Demonstration may be through objective measures such as IQ versus achievement test scores; math versus verbal SAT scores; consistently

high versus consistently low grades in particular subjects; and diagnoses or special education classifications. Also, students are interviewed and their behavior profile and teacher reports are taken into consideration. However, students who are required to take two or more remedial courses at the College are not eligible for participation.

Even though the program is relatively new, Dr. Eisner is encouraged by apparent success. "Both through pre-semester and post-semester testing and through observation and anecdotal evidence, we have seen students progress. They persist in their classes and demonstrate high academic performance, strategic learning, organizational skills, sense of campus affiliation, socialization and appropriate classroom behaviors," she says. One of the first students to attend NCC through the Achilles Project has achieved a GPA of 4.0 and has been accepted to New York University. Dr. Eisner and all of the faculty who make up the program look forward to expanding the Achilles Project and further opening the doors of higher education to students who might otherwise not go through them.

Those interested in more information about the Achilles Project at Nassau Community College should contact Dr. Eisner at 516-572-7451.

NCC 101: Enhancing the College Experience

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a Nassau student. "That, along with information about all the clubs, advisement and academic assistance centers available on campus, helps incoming students educate themselves about what it takes to achieve their goals at the College."

First offered in 1992, NCC 101 has run every semester for the past 16 years. Most classes meet once a week throughout the semester, with some sections offered on weekends. Some departments offer special sections of the course for students pursuing degree programs in that area. In the fall 2007 semester, said Professor Conway, approximately 1,700 students enrolled in 85 sections.

The College also offers NCC 101 during Spring 2008

the summer sessions, with several sections scheduled for summer 2008. This fall, some sections of the course will be linked to freshman learning communities.

Student response to NCC 101 has been overwhelmingly positive. Asked if they would recommend the course to incoming freshmen, more than 95 percent said they would.

**"ONE OF OUR GOALS IS TO
ENHANCE THE STUDENTS'
SENSE OF BELONGING."**

— NCC Professor Stella Fox

"NCC 101 is very helpful to those entering college," said student Marika Adams. "It tells you what to expect and what is expected of you." Many students have also noted that they have appreciated the value

of NCC 101 as the semester progressed. What's more, studies have found that students who successfully complete NCC 101 persist in college at a higher rate than those who have not taken the course.

The course has also linked students to a faculty member whom they can contact if they need assistance. "Many former students have come back to me for help with questions about courses, areas of study and other aspects of College life," said Professor Conway. "It's important for students to know that they have an ongoing source of support."

Professor Robbins added, "I think NCC 101 opens the door for students to think about college—and themselves—in new ways."

If you're interested in finding out more about NCC 101, call 516-572-8030.

LEARNING ABOUT INTERIOR DESIGN — AND LIFE NASSAU INTERIOR DESIGN STUDENTS RENOVATE MOMMAS HOUSE



Nassau students Eric Scigliano, Kaitlyn Melexenis and Rena Pearlman visit with MOMMAS House residents in one of the recently renovated playrooms.

Sometimes life has a way of teaching you lessons—both the lessons you set out to learn and the ones you had no idea were heading your way. Nassau Community College Interior Design students recently learned many lessons when they renovated MOMMAS House in Glen Cove. Several had to do with the skills they will need as they pursue careers in interior design. Other lessons had nothing to do with interior design, but a lot to do with life, kindness and compassion.

Touched by the house and its residents—the mothers are close to the age of the students themselves—the students took it upon themselves to independently approach local businesses for in-kind donations to MOMMAS House for this independent study project. Once they had the necessary renovation materials, the 20 students involved went to work, under the auspices of the NCC Interior Design Society and the direction of Marketing and Interior Design Prof. Roseanne Scarpelli. For an entire semester, the students painted, laid new floors, installed lighting, reupholstered furniture and did all the things that it took to completely remodel five rooms of the house.

The results, according to the house's residents and MOMMAS House Director Pat Shea, were fabulous. Shea was extremely happy with the way the rooms turned out. The students from the College were so motivated and helpful," she says.



Playtime at MOMMAS House.

"They took a house and made it a beautiful home."

Students who participated in the project bonded with the mothers and their children. "It was a rewarding experience on so many levels," says Kaitlyn Melexenis, an NCC interior design student. Motivated by their task, the students came in on Saturdays and whenever else they could to complete the job. "This was the kind of experience that combined hands-on learning for our students with giving back to a community that greatly needs the help," says Prof. Scarpelli. "The students went above and beyond what the study project originally called for."

MOMMAS House provides deserving young mothers aged 17 to 21 with a nurturing home for up to two years. The homes—there are currently three community homes and one transitional home on Long Island—offer a sanctuary where these women can get the support they need while they learn to become responsible for themselves. They alleviate the isolation of young moms, teach them how to care for their babies and offer the stable environment and daycare that allows the women to attend school or job training. As they learn the practical skills needed to be a parent, the mothers must save

money in preparation for the day they leave MOMMAS House. Donations, grants and the assistance of volunteers provide most of the 22-year-old, not-for-profit organization's support. The students who worked on MOMMAS House will not soon forget the experience. "I knew I wanted to be an interior designer," says Rena Pearlman, another design student. "What I didn't know is how much impact this project was going to have on me."

Lessons learned.

SUMMER SESSION REGISTRATION



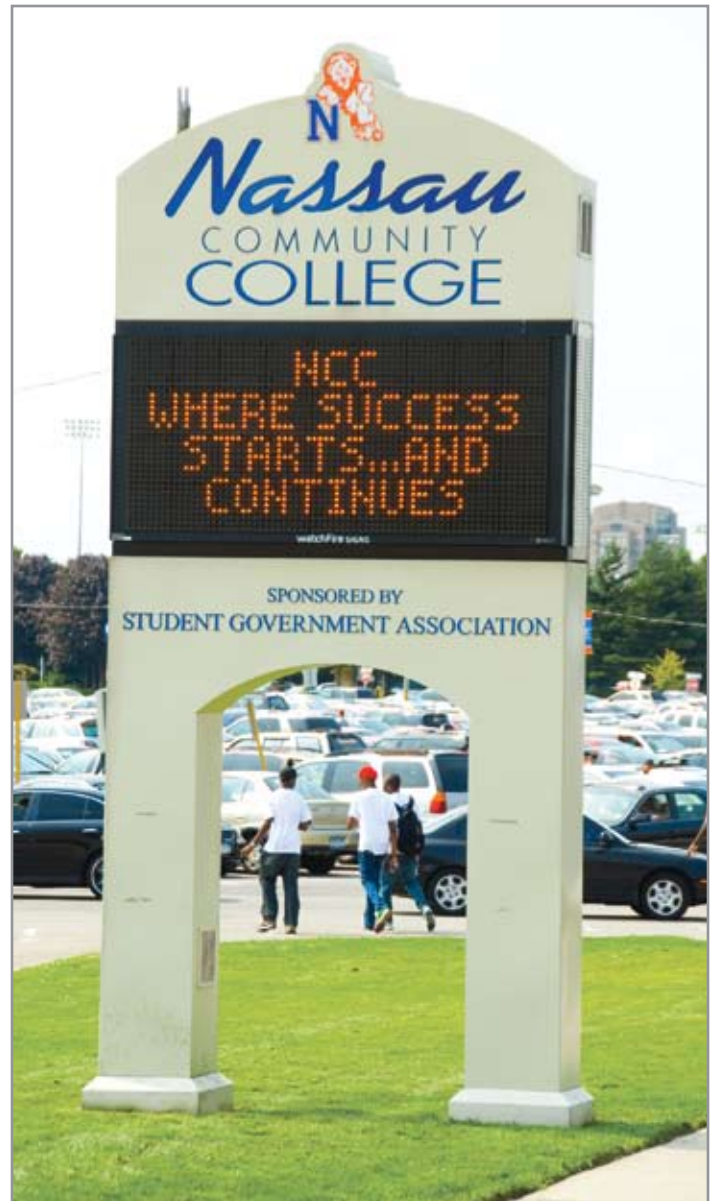
**REGISTRATION IS GOING ON NOW
FOR SUMMER SESSION 2008 AT NCC**

**Summer Session I
May 27 – June 26**

**Summer Session I Late
June 2 – July 3**

**Summer Session 2
July 7 – August 7**

**For more information
visit our website at www.ncc.edu**



**One Education Drive
Garden City, NY 11530-6793
www.ncc.edu
A unit of the State
University of New York**

President	Sean A. Fanelli
Publisher	Reginald Tuggle
Editor	Alicia Steger
Faculty/Staff Highlights	Gail Mattimore
Layout/Design	Mary-Jeannette Floratos
Support Staff	Kathleen Johnson
Principal Photography	William Baker
Production	Thomas Conigliaro

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College/Community Relations
TEL: (516) 572-9634
FAX: (516) 572-7497
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