

**DEAN MYRNA CHASE
WEISSMAN SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES,
GENERAL FACULTY REPORT, Spring 2007**

The mission of our college and our university is central for the nation—whether we can or should provide a quality liberal education for culturally diverse students in a large, urban, public college with a commitment to professional education. The Carnegie Endowment has chosen CUNY as one of the very few university systems in this country that can meaningfully define and model that mission—the engagement of students with the humanities, arts, and sciences to develop the skills that will enable them to transform their lives in productive and meaningful ways and to prepare them to lead responsible lives as individuals and as citizens. That mission is fundamental to the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences in the role it plays in Baruch and in CUNY and as it tests and proves what can be done in a large, public, and very diverse college..

Support to the School

For the last years the Weissman School has devoted its strongest planning and delivery efforts to establishing learning communities for the incoming freshman class. It has been a cooperative effort with Student Development and the Provost's office since the beginning. This last fall twenty-five learning communities provided an introduction to college and a community of friends and scholars to 500 students who chose the experience. Next fall the numbers will rise to 35-40 learning communities of 700 to 800 students. All the indicators are positive in terms of retention, commitment, participation, pass rates, faculty satisfaction and student involvement. For those who are involved, students, faculty and administration, there is no doubt that Baruch, like so many other colleges in the country and city, should continue to organize the first year experience in this fashion. What is difficult for an urban, public, and very large school to provide is a part of the experience that small liberal arts residential colleges can provide, but Weissman has tried and has proven that it can be done and that it is worth doing. The future depends on administration, faculty and students, but the ambition is present is to make learning communities universal at Baruch.

The Weissman School has now 2500 majors in the arts and sciences. Even with our enrollment culture that students either declare their minors before they have finished the base curriculum or they wait until the semester in which they will graduate we know that we have at least 1300 minors in Psychology and Communications Studies. Realizing our mission for the numbers of students we are talking about at Baruch requires focus and support. In the last couple of years the president, the provost, the Baruch College Fund, and CUNY Central have given support in important ways—an adjusted adjunct budget, focused development for graduate and undergraduate education, funds and lines for the

hiring of much needed faculty, and resources for initiatives to improve the college experience of incoming students.

The College strategic plan has focused our development for graduate and undergraduate education on journalism, psychology, and mathematics in financial engineering and actuarial sciences. It outlines a plan to strengthen WSAS's role to add to the College's importance in urban studies. The quality of students the College attracts in the last few years with the CUNY Honors College and the focused program of recruitment has shifted the curricular and advisement focus as well, particularly to assist our students who are focused on law and public service. In accordance with the strategic plan President Waldron allocated designated funds to Psychology and to the Financial Engineering program; both programs will be strengthened by new hires this year as well.

Central to the administration's thinking is a program of general faculty development and supplements of assistance to research and scholarship. Weissman faculty received from the Baruch College Fund \$115,000 for research, travel, and graduate assistants. Those funds were equal to the BCF special contributions to Zicklin. In addition forty-five members of the full time faculty received scholarly released time and other travel and research expenses have been drawn from George Weissman's gift.

The School has gained support of five **additional** lines from the CUNY Compact. At the same time the Vice Chancellor's inclusive Campaign for Success emphasizing retention and graduation rates brought important resources to these areas of achievement for Baruch and Weissman. CUNY Central's shift from the FYI (Freshman Year Initiative) to CUE (Campaign for Undergraduate Education) enables us to develop and support projects and pilots across the entire undergraduate career of our students. The support has been multi-pronged—to students, to faculty in teaching and scholarship, and to administration in counseling, assessment, and consulting and modeling of programs.

The demand for improved performance in language and analytical mathematical skills which is so important for our students and our reputation as a college has been acknowledged and responsibility for it accepted. All the indicators—scores on skills tests—tell us that Baruch is getting the best students in CUNY, yet our success rate does not match those indicators. For Baruch the focus is on initiatives in English and in Mathematics to improve of our students' skills in both disciplines The pilots the Weissman school has launched indicate successful but costly small class intervention with technological and other supports. The assessment efforts of these interventions are costly as well. The issues are being addressed with WSAS's very best efforts and talents. That focus will not let up until Baruch has achieve significant results measured by our students' realizing their aspirations, whether they are in business, public service, or the arts and sciences.

The College is buzzing with a number of model projects, some supported with CUE monies—the writing center, SACC, ESL experiments, the math experimentation in pre-calculus and calculus—and some with Schwartz funds. Math projects-- specifically focused on the failure rates in pre-calculus, include the SACC tutors, technological

enhancement, and more intensive faculty development-- have received CUE and Weissman funds. That influx of assistance improved the pass rate in pre-calculus by 15%. In summary, the support for the school has been turned to good use for students and faculty alike, for the achievements of Baruch and for the advance of scholarly reputation and visibility of WSAS.

Enrollment/curricular Issues

The timing of this support has been critical to WSAS success at the precise moment that the numbers of students who are taking courses, particularly minors but majors as well, has burgeoned. For the minor requirements to achieve the goals intended by the curricular innovation, adequate guidance and sufficient offerings and effective administration must take place. WSAS is still in an awkward phase in which the goals, ambitions and realities are not yet planned effectively. The traditional ways of scheduling for a school and a college which never has “down time” now that it offers two sessions of summer school, a January term, and two semesters of day and evening classes will not fulfill the demand or maximize educational opportunities for our students.

Though the numbers in particular departments have leaped up there is a slight overall drop in total numbers taught by WSAS. In keeping with the decision to hold fast on the overall student body numbers, the students enrolled in Spring 2007 total 26, 322 which is a drop from 26,845 last year this time. Nonetheless, the students who come to Baruch continue to enroll in WSAS for at least half of their credits/courses. They are every year more qualified, if measured by high school averages, SAT scores, and ability to achieve in their first year, whether it is the freshman year or a transfer year. Their achievements once here indicate their aptitude for college as we have seen in every standardized measurement we have—the pass rate on the CPE, the success in the ACT, the length of time to graduation and such. Their responsibility for their education and our responsibility to provide realistic and realizable choices is a work in progress.

Intellectual and Cultural Achievements

Each year in the middle of March the College honors the faculty achievements in the world of scholarship. The hiring season gives us the opportunity of hearing and discussing with candidates the subjects of their research. Faculty seminars and invited speakers compete for the attention of resident intellects. The Whiting fellows, who are junior faculty who have a remarkable record of teaching and scholarship, are announced. In the spring semester of each year as well the exhibitions, performances, and presentations of students and faculty of Fine and Performing Arts – the school play, the Alexander String Quartet Beethoven concerts and classroom visits, the Silberman Concerts, the Milt Hinton jazz concert, the Actor’s Studio staged reading of Strindberg’s *Strong*, the Harman writer in residence Mark Kurlansky talk, and the Acting Company’s *“For Services Rendered”* and the Baruch Choir concert—fill our calendar with delights. The life of the mind is alive and well at Baruch College—healthier and more vital each year.