



TO: The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: John L. D'Agati *John L. D'Agati*

SUBJECT: Boricua College: Master Plan Amendment to offer an Associate in Science (A.S.) degree in Paralegal Studies at its Brooklyn and Bronx Campuses

DATE: January 7, 2013

AUTHORIZATION(S):

John B. ...
SUMMARY

Issue for Decision (Consent Agenda)

Should the Board of Regents approve a master plan amendment to authorize the College to offer an Associate in Science (A.S.) degree program in Paralegal Studies at both its Brooklyn and Bronx campuses?

Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by State regulation.

Proposed Handling

The question will come before the full Board at its January 2013 meeting, where it will be voted on and action taken.

Procedural History

Master plan amendment is required because the proposed program would be the College's first associate-level degree program in the disciplinary area of Business at each of the two campuses.

Background Information

Boricua College was founded in 1974 with three specific aims: 1) to strengthen Boricua (i.e., Puerto Rican) culture through a bilingual, bicultural approach to all learning, and special course offerings in Puerto Rican history, art, and culture; 2) to offer students a solid foundation in the concepts and methods of the humanities, social

sciences, and physical sciences; and 3) to offer students the opportunity to design highly individualized learning programs and work at their own pace towards intellectual and career goals. As such, the College caters to adult students returning to college after some years of employment or home-management as well as to students whose continuing family or employment responsibilities would otherwise make a college education difficult.

Purpose and Goals: The proposed program is in keeping with Boricua College's mission as a Puerto Rican and non-traditional liberal arts college, designed to meet the educational needs of the growing adult second generation, Puerto Rican and Hispanic bilingual students and those from other underrepresented communities in New York City.

The proposed program would prepare candidates to work in law offices, assisting lawyers by conducting research, and a variety of other tasks. It would give students an overview of the legal and court systems in New York, as well as an understanding of the ethics, business and communication in the legal field. It is expected that about 70 percent of the graduates would work for law firms in and around the South Bronx and Brooklyn. Others would work in government offices and business firms.

Curriculum: The course content of the proposed program is specifically designed to immerse students in legal ideas and activities. The proposed program requires completion of 67 credits of coursework: 30 credits in Liberal Arts and Sciences, and 37 credits in paralegal courses, including 8 credits in field internships and practicum. A unique feature of the program is that it addresses the students' needs for the basic cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning that act as scaffolding for the specifics of paralegal studies. In addition, existing composition courses will be extended to include legal writing courses.

Faculty: The College has hired one full-time faculty who has a J.D. degree from the University of Puerto Rico and a Master's in Law (LL.M.) from Columbia University, plus eight years of experience in litigation and administering a law firm. It has also hired another part-time faculty who has a J.D. from Georgetown University and expects to hire another additional part-time faculty, also with a J.D. Additional faculty will be hired as enrollments increase.

Admissions: Admission requirements would be the same as institutional requirements: 1) Be at least 17 years of age; 2) Be a high school graduate, or have the equivalent of a high school diploma; and 3) Pass a written entrance examination and an oral interview given by the Admissions Committee of the Faculty.

Students: It is anticipated that a sizable number of students will be Hispanic and female, reflecting the characteristics of the student body as a whole. The College anticipates an initial enrollment of 10 students at each of the two campuses in the first year, and 100 by the fifth year of the program.

Academic Resources: The College has the library holdings necessary for such a program and will acquire the requisite computer software, including access to electronic law libraries. Moreover, students will be able to use public libraries with statutes and

case reports and regularly visit local bar associations and law school libraries. As a result, students will learn how to conduct research in a real law library and on-line.

Finances: The Department's Office of Audit Services conducted a review of the College's audited financial statements for the year ending June 30, 2011, and cited no current financial issues. In addition, federal composite scores over the past decade indicated that the institution was financially healthy during this period.

Need: Concerning need for the proposed program, the College has indicated that law firms throughout New York City are looking for qualified paralegals of Hispanic background. As the Hispanic population in New York City increases, with over 52 percent of the population in the Bronx being Hispanic, law firms are serving a steadily growing Spanish-speaking population, many of whom do not speak English. Hence, the growing need for Hispanic paraprofessionals.

The need for a Paralegal Studies Program in the Bronx and in Brooklyn is also borne out by the fact that currently, according to the Department of Labor Statistics (2009), the highest number of job opportunities are in the allied health services and in the paralegal fields. In the 2009 fiscal year, over 7,000 full- and part-time paralegal positions were filled by law offices, state, and city run legal agencies, a 33 percent increase from the year before.

Several other colleges in the New York City region currently offer associate-level programs in Paralegal Studies. However, because of the high demand for paralegal personnel in law offices and governmental agencies in New York City, and because a large number of legal clients in New York City are Latinos and African Americans, Boricua College's proposed paralegal program is expected to supplement more than compete with other paralegal programs.

Planning Review: Following its standard protocol, the Department canvassed degree-granting institutions in the New York City region. Three institutions responded: one supported the College's plans; one had no comment; the third stated that Boricua's proposal will not have an effect on its programs.

Department Review: The Department has determined that the proposed programs meet the standards for registration set forth in the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Regents approve a master plan amendment to authorize the College to offer an Associate in Science (A.S.) degree program in Paralegal Studies at both its Brooklyn and Bronx campuses.

Timetable for Implementation

The amendment will be effective until January 31, 2014, unless the Department registers the programs prior to that date, in which case master plan amendment shall be without term.