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Lehman College Launches Second Bronx Recovery Corps Cohort, Partners with Local Employers to Harness Bronx Talent and Prepare Students for Career Success

BRONX, N.Y.— As the Bronx fights to revitalize its economy nearly two years after the start of the pandemic, a new cohort of Lehman College students has been dispatched to small businesses and nonprofits in the borough as part of the Bronx Recovery Corps, a program that allows students to earn academic credit and gain work experience while contributing to the region’s comeback.

Lehman launched the initiative in January in collaboration with the nonprofit HERE to HERE. Braiding workplace learning into students’ academic development, the Corps pairs students with local businesses and community organizations for paid, part-time positions. The program offers students training, mentoring, and the opportunity to expand their networks, preparing them for careers in growing industries like health care, hospitality, and education.

It benefits local businesses and community organizations by connecting employers with a pool of diverse, local talent at a critical time. What’s more, job funding for these students comes not from the employer but a generous grant from Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation and, if students are eligible, the federal work/study program.

“The Bronx Recovery Corps is a demonstration of what Lehman does best, which is to identify challenges affecting our students and the wider community, propose solutions, and provide the support needed for the response to have real impact,” said **Lehman College President Fernando Delgado**. “It exemplifies Lehman’s commitment to expanding opportunities for our students and working with partners in the business and nonprofit space to cultivate and harness the talent pipeline in the Bronx while boosting the area’s recovery.”

The promise of the Bronx Recovery Corps is so strong that even elected officials are earmarking funds for it. Representative Adriano Espaillat set aside \$250,000 in federal aid for the program as part of a requested \$11.5 million in community project funding for his district (NY-13), which

includes parts of the Bronx and upper Manhattan. It was approved by the House of Representatives over the summer and awaits approval by the Senate.

What's more, others have begun to replicate the model. In June, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that the city would invest \$4.5 million over five years to create the Brooklyn Recovery Corps at Medgar Evers College.

Like the Corps' inaugural cohort in the spring, the new cohort will include a total of 40 student fellows, who will be matched with 11 local businesses and community groups over the 2021-22 academic year. Fifteen students began working with partnering organizations in October and will continue through the spring, while one student already employed by a local business will be matched with a professional mentor through the Corps' partnership with City Mentors. Additional fellows are currently being recruited and will begin working during the spring semester, from February to June.

Participating employers include Alpha Ridge Inc., BronxCare Health System, the Bronx District Office of Congressman Ritchie Torres, Duro Workforce, Equity Design, HERE to HERE, Lehman College (the Office of International Programs and Community Engagement and the Office of Wellness Education and Promotion), the Riverdale Y, Sapna NYC, South Bronx United, and Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS).

In addition to supporting the borough's recovery and receiving paid compensation, students will also be enrolled in a career readiness course, for which they'll receive academic credit, and attend workshops on career development and community engagement. The course will cover essential professional skills such as resume writing, crafting LinkedIn profiles, interviewing, and successfully navigating workplace relationships.

Students in the inaugural cohort found the workshops and the career readiness course incredibly valuable. They also spoke highly of their placements, which they said either aligned with or clarified their professional interests.

Mabel Lanzo, a junior graphic design major and 2021-22 fellow, agrees. She was matched with VOLS, a nonprofit that provides free, civil legal services to underserved communities, and assists in designing the group's flyers and ads.

"I used to always second guess myself and tell myself, no, you can't do this, but thanks to the program and my internship at VOLS, I've seen that I can be responsible and organized and master time management," she said. "The Bronx Recovery Corps program helps you learn more about yourself and what your skill sets are, and it gives you the necessary confidence to go into a workplace and give 100 percent."

Participating employers are equally enthusiastic. When Alondra Vasquez, a volunteer coordinator at [South Bronx United](#), which pairs soccer with academic support, mentoring, immigration services, and more, heard about the Corps, she knew it was something she had to connect her organization to. “I’d been hoping that we’d be able to partner with Lehman somehow, and once I learned about the Corps program, I was excited to get on board. It’s the perfect fit for us because it aligns with our mission to build up the Bronx and help young people from the borough succeed.”

A Lehman alumna herself, Vasquez participated in the [CUNY Service Corps](#), which recruits University students, faculty, and staff to work on projects that support the city’s civic, economic, and environmental sustainability, before graduating from the College in 2019. The experience, she said, inspired her to get more involved at the local level, and she sees that same giving spirit in the three Bronx Recovery Corps fellows now working with South Bronx United. “They’re so eager to support the community and work with our youth,” she said. “They’ve been great additions to our team.”

The Bronx-based nonprofit [HERE to HERE](#), whose mission is to unite employers, educators, and community-based organizations towards the shared priority of launching young people into family-sustaining careers, provided support to Lehman for the initial design of the Recovery Corps model through a grant made possible by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It has also helped pair students with local employers.

“Our collaboration with Lehman College’s Bronx Recovery Corps is rooted in our belief that building a robust, local talent pipeline starts with placing students on a path to career success,” said **Abby Jo Sigal, HERE to HERE Founding CEO**. “The launch of the second Bronx Recovery Corps cohort deepens engagement with local employers and the community while providing students with academic credit and career preparation tools. This is truly a strategic program that benefits everyone. Not only does this integrated learning program advantage students, but it also builds a pipeline to contribute needed support and services to the city’s economic recovery.”

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ABOUT LEHMAN COLLEGE

Lehman College is The City University of New York’s only senior college in the Bronx, serving the borough and the surrounding region as an intellectual, economic, and cultural center. Lehman provides undergraduate and graduate studies in the liberal arts and sciences and professional education within a dynamic research environment. For more information, go to lehman.edu.

ABOUT HERE TO HERE

HERE to HERE champions young people by working to redefine the systems that

unfairly burden Black and Brown students as they pursue their career ambitions. We understand that the issues are complex and interrelated. That's why we create effective partnerships, prioritize the thoughts and opinions of young people, and mobilize people and organizations—demonstrating how our collective efforts to create a just and inclusive talent system will create lasting change. We believe the talent of young people fuels our economy and our world. How we reinvent these systems determines our future. For more information, visit <https://www.heretohere.org>