

Governor Cuomo Visits LaGuardia CC's Program for the Deaf

Governor Mario Cuomo, recognizing that educational opportunities for deaf adults must be expanded, announced at a visit to LaGuardia Community College that the state will provide direct funding to the college's Program for Deaf Adults.

The governor pledged \$125,000 in his executive budget for LaGuardia's program, the largest education program for the deaf in New York City.

The announcement was made before a group of 100 deaf students during his visit to the college on March 14th.

As an interpreter signed his words, Governor Cuomo described the college's program as a successful demonstration of how effective government can be.

"This school reflects government at its best," the governor said. "The school is government doing the job of removing impediments and doing it marvelously well."

The state's commitment to the program will help the college offset the enormously high cost of educating deaf adults. For example, to provide a single deaf student with one, in-class interpreter costs the college \$8,000 a year, while the cost to the student for tuition is about \$1,000 annually.

"But this is only part of the support services the students require," said program director Fern Khan. "No other college in New York has committed itself to this kind of accessibility—yet at the same low tuition costs which unimpaired City University students pay."

PHOTO: BILL FREELAND



The college presently has 160 deaf students enrolled in its various credit, non-credit, and career programs. The college, however, is experiencing a dramatic increase in enrollment due to the thousands of children who were born deaf as a result of the nationwide rubella epidemics of the mid-1960s. These young people are now beginning to graduate from high school and they are seeking a college education.

During his visit, the governor was given a look at the multi-faceted program. He attended an American Sign Language class and observed students who are being prepared for careers in the foodservice industry.

The vocational training program, funded by the Job Training Partnership Act, is also designed to teach students word processing and other office skills.

At the student forum, a group of deaf students presented the governor with a LaGuardia sweat shirt and College President Joseph Shenker took the opportunity to praise the governor for his sensitivity to the problem. He remarked, "You are the first governor in this nation to respond to the special needs of the silent majority, the thousands of deaf adults who want equal access to higher education." □