

Gazette Advertiser

Covering the towns of Rhinebeck, Red Hook, Milan and Clinton, the villages of Rhinebeck, Red Hook and Tivoli and the Rhinebeck and Red Hook school districts

Vol. CLIV, No. 47

Wednesday, November 22, 2000

75 CENTS

Federal funds to boost Bard Clemente program

by Eileen Keefe

Bard College was recently awarded a \$500,044 grant, to help fund the Clemente Course, which provides free college-level instruction in the humanities to individuals from low-income neighborhoods.

The funds will be used not only to expand the program, but to create a model for other colleges and universities interested in establishing similar programs on their campuses.

"The success of our program is getting a lot of recognition, and we're excited about working with other academic institutions," said Ted Dewsnap, assistant director of the Clemente Program at Bard College.

The course, which is offered in partnership with neighborhood organizations in under-served communities across the country, was established in 1995 and is designed to provide a bridge to higher education for students who ordinarily wouldn't view college as an option.

"We're providing a first rate education experience with college professors and challenging curriculum," Dewsnap said. "For many of our students this is the first time their work, their intellects and their potential are recognized."

The grant, awarded by the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), will be used to help five academic institutions across the country create and operate their own versions of the Clemente Course near their campuses.

"We'll be helping colleges develop their own versions of the program including curriculum and execution," Dewsnap said.

The course began as a pilot program at the Roberto Clemente Family Guidance Center in lower Manhattan, and was founded by Earl Shorris, an author concerned with combating cycles of poverty. Funded by private foundations and individuals, it has grown into a national program offering courses in 14 communities across the country.

This year, programs debuted in Atlanta, Chicago and Washington, D.C. Students who qualify for enrollment in the course receive one year of college level instruction in humanities disciplines including American history, philosophy and literature. Tuition, books, childcare, and transportation are provided.

Students are selected at the grassroots level in their communities through churches, community centers and community groups.

Bard College grants a certificate of achievement to all students completing the course and six college credits to those who have participated at a superior academic level.

Of the 514 students who have enrolled in the Clemente Course since its inception, 286 have completed the course of study, 240 have earned college credit and 203 have gone on to attend college or plan to do so in the future. Two Clemente course graduates received diplomas from Bard in the past year, and six others are now enrolled as full-time scholarship students at Bard.

"This program is relatively inexpensive, simple to execute and it works," Dewsnap said.