

Cambridge College: Strengthening Community Through Education

Cambridge College partners with Mother Caroline Academy

Cambridge College and Mother Caroline Academy, located on Blue Hill Ave. in Dorchester, Massachusetts, both seek to close the gap of opportunity for lower-income students by removing barriers to education. Because of these complimentary missions, the two institutions have partnered together with the generous assistance of the Tudor Foundation to provide higher education to Mother Caroline Academy parents and community members.

In the city of Dorchester, the poverty rate is 16.8% (City of Boston Department of Neighborhood Development, 2000), of whom 20-26% earn an annual income of less than \$20,000 (Fields Corner Community Survey, 1999). In August of 2007, Cambridge College received a \$375,000 grant from the Tudor Foundation for scholarship support for Mother Caroline Academy and Education Center constituents, which includes parents of Mother Caroline students, students from the Adult Ed Center, community members as well as members of the Mother Caroline staff.

After one meeting, the wheels were in motion and classes began on February 5th. The first cohort of 24 Mother Caroline adults started their coursework. Each of these students received a scholarship to help them finance their education. Their rigorous first term of study includes three courses (seminar, writing, and computer applications), taking place every Tuesday and Thursday. The classes are held at Mother Caroline Academy, a safe, convenient and familiar place where the adults can ease into the learning process and higher education experience. The students will eventually take classes at the main Cambridge College building in Cambridge. It is an ambitious effort, but these adults have a high standard set as an example – by the younger generation! At Mother Caroline Academy, girls boast a 100% success rate of graduating high school in four years, and 89% of them attend college.

Cambridge College and Project Hope establish Neighborhood College

What began as a low-key discussion with the Dudley Square Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) has now become a dynamic collaboration between Cambridge College and Project Hope, a multi-service agency that has provided low-income women with a comprehensive support structure to allow access to education, jobs, housing and emergency services for the past 25 years.

Cambridge College received a planning grant from the Mabel Louise Riley Foundation to work with Project Hope to lay the groundwork for a first ever “Neighborhood College” in the Dudley Square area of Boston, Massachusetts. Dudley Square is one of Boston’s poorest neighborhoods with a per capita income of \$7,600, compared to nearly \$16,000 for the City of Boston as a whole. Unemployment is at 16% and 32% of the population falls below the poverty level. The majority of the community is composed of African

American, Cape Verdean, and Hispanic families. Of these families, many have some or no experience in attending college and only 7% of residents have attained a college degree, further limiting career opportunities and earnings potential.

In the pilot program, Cambridge College and Project Hope trained a cohort of 22 low-income early care workers from the greater Dudley neighborhood and provided them with a package of credit bearing courses, leading to a certificate in Early Care and Education. There is a tremendous need for early care workers to take college courses and earn degrees, as there is a state mandate for child care center staff to earn college degrees and it may soon be required of licensed family day care providers. All courses will enable these students to further develop their professionalism in the field and to move their careers forward. This is a partnership that can lead to unlimited potential for the community. The College is pleased to announce that the Mabel Louise Riley Foundation has approved a second grant in support of expanding this program.