



Universities join de Blasio push for tech pipeline

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Several higher education institutions in the city have committed to serve on the city's recently formed Tech Talent Pipeline Academic Council to help develop pathways toward technology careers by working to align computer science education and workforce needs.

The institutions are the Borough of Manhattan Community College, Hunter College, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, LaGuardia Community College, Lehman College, Macaulay Honors College, the New York City College of Technology, the New York Institute of Technology, N.Y.U. Tandon School of Engineering, Pace University, Queens College, Cornell Tech and Columbia's Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science.

The de Blasio administration will recognize those colleges' commitment today as it marks the launch of Computer Science Education Week. The Tech Talent Pipeline is the administration's \$10 million private-public partnership focused on developing training and education necessary for New York to take on jobs with technology companies in the city.

Deputy mayor Alicia Glen said in a statement that the city "is committed to bringing industry to the table to provide insight and opportunities to further develop NYC's exceptional pool of homegrown tech talent, part of our Career Pathways approach for workforce development."

The city hosted an inaugural meeting of the Academic Council on November 24 at City Hall, the first time the city has convened the leadership of all of those institutions together.

The focus of the discussion was the capacity of different institutions to develop and provide industry-informed curricula, how to implement successful program models, to realign curricula to connect graduates with tech sector jobs and how to scale sustainable partnerships, according to a city official. The institutions on the council have committed to supporting the city by engaging in curriculum review, the development of those new models, and faculty-industry collaboration.

Among the participants at the meeting was Felix Matos Rodriguez, the president of Queens College. In a brief interview Sunday, he noted that the college is already engaged in a pilot Tech Talent Pipeline Residency beginning this semester to provide paid internships to juniors and seniors in computer-science related fields that also includes coaching in career-relevant "soft skills." The hope is that as part of the internships, companies will also provide feedback on possible modifications to courses. For the pilot, students' stipends are funded through the Tech Talent Pipeline, but the hope is companies may fund them directly in the long-term in recognition of the program's value as an easy recruitment tool, he said.

Rodriguez called the council a "fantastic project," noting that institutions leaders had the opportunity to engage with executives from technology companies such as Facebook and Google, "so that we hear from them what they're looking for, what are the best chances to place our students ... and then we also tell them about the realities on our end in terms of the talent."

He said the meeting also discussed trends seen by the industry and touched not just on computer science narrowly, but also the importance of students having the experience of working in groups and solving problems.

"The more we can do in our curriculum computer-science related or not to do that, the better those students are going to be when they go into the real world," he said.

He said the council was also an opportunity to avoid pitfalls that have occurred in other cities by ensuring the representation of women and applicants from diverse backgrounds.

"That's something that universities like Queens can put on the table because of the students that we recruit," he said.

Other ideas included how to encourage industry residencies at college, or to have professors do sabbaticals in the industry and bring that experience back into the classroom, he said.

"If we get to do half of the things that we discussed, they'll be gamechangers," he said.

He also applauded the mayor's office for proactive involvement on the issue.

"This is, I think, quite unique from what I hear with other college presidents across the nation," he said. "I don't know of many that have had the city government be such a key partner in bringing people to the table, that's special ... we need to take advantage of it to the max."