



Local high school students visit the Bronx Campus

Recruiting in the Bronx

One Relationship at a Time

Recruitment is the lifeblood of any college. Mercy's Executive Director of Recruitment for the Bronx Campus, Cecil Wright, Ed.D., has developed a multifaceted approach to recruiting — one that involves going out into the community to build relationships, as well as inviting students and their families to visit the Bronx Campus. While he is playing a long game, there are early signs that Wright's approach is working. Developing stronger community connections has led to the increased awareness of Mercy College's program in the Bronx.

"We're not only thinking about enrolling students in the next year or two, but we're also trying to build a long-term pipeline and be the community partner to help create positive change in the Bronx," Wright said. "That's done

by continuously making sure that we have a presence and a voice in the community."



Stephanie Massiah, M.S. '06 (center) and Cecil Wright pose with Jasmine Cruz '09, M.S. '20 (another school counselor at Westchester Square Academy)

In this endeavor, Wright has relied on the guidance of Mercy's Bronx Advisory Council, which was established in 2017 to better connect Mercy with the

Bronx community. The Council is comprised of several community leaders — including religious leaders, business owners and principals from local high schools. The council advises Mercy on ways to improve outreach to the Bronx community, increase Mercy's base of support in the Bronx, strengthen Mercy's programs and build awareness of what Mercy has to offer. "We're bringing the right people to the table, asking about how to best serve students and the community, and then making it happen," Wright explained.

The recruitment team often works with Bronx middle and high schools, in addition to community colleges and local businesses. For example, the nonprofit New York Edge brought a group of middle schoolers to visit the Bronx Campus this past winter while simultaneously broadcasting the visit to several other middle schools to reach

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almost 700 students at once. “They can see what our campus looks like,” said Wright. “They can hear from current students who look like them. And they can imagine themselves at Mercy.” The recruitment team also organizes unique events and partnerships with individual schools in the Bronx such as supplying Mercy gear as prizes to encourage increased attendance.

Partnerships with Bronx churches, synagogues and mosques are

the Bronx also help to build name recognition and goodwill for Mercy. For example, students regularly volunteer at soup kitchens and perform at schools, and Mercy organizes an annual walking tour of the Bronx. Wright also notes that he meets alumni wherever he goes in the Bronx: “I took a photo with a Mercy alum on 65 school visits this past recruitment year. That’s significant. And if they’re not working in schools, they work in a hospital or a bank or attend a

time to look for her first school counseling job, she wanted to stay in the Bronx and help make a difference in the community where she was raised and where she studied. “My heart is in the Bronx,” she explained.

While Mercy recruitment staff spend a lot of time in the field, the Bronx Campus also hosts events that attract prospective students and their families. For the past two Octobers, Mercy has hosted Latinx Fiesta, a popular event that involves music, food and performances celebrating Hispanic culture. “Students want diversity,” Wright explained. “But they also want people who look like them and sound like them.” The Bronx Campus also opens its doors to all kinds of community-based organizations — hosting meetings for school principals, hospitals and the Bronx clergy, for example.

“One of the many things we do well at Mercy is provide access,”



Accepted Students Day 2019 at the Bronx Campus



Latinx Fiesta 2019

increasingly important as well. Last summer, the recruitment team hosted a back-to-school event at a mosque for the first time by leveraging the Bronx Advisory Council’s relationships. Wright notes that significantly more students of diverse faiths have enrolled at the Bronx Campus, resulting in students recently spearheading efforts to create a campus multi-faith room. Beyond active recruitment efforts, Mercy’s numerous community service initiatives and the sheer number of alumni giving back to

church, synagogue or mosque. It’s a lot easier to recruit for the College because of all the alumni making significant contributions in the community.”

On one community visit, Wright met alumna Stephanie Massiah, M.S. ’06, a school counselor at Westchester Square Academy, a high school that is just over a mile away from Mercy’s Bronx Campus. She had chosen Mercy because of the counseling program’s strong reputation and the Bronx Campus’s convenient location. When it was

Wright said. “Some of the most brilliant students I’ve met in the last couple of years didn’t know about Mercy until we visited their neighborhood. So we make sure we’re out there in the community, being good neighbors and giving back. I feel very strongly that in the next couple of years, we’re going to continue to see more and more Bronx students enroll at Mercy” — many of whom, like Massiah, want to study in the Bronx and stay in the Bronx to make a difference in their own community.