

Building Transfer-Ready STEM Academies Through Faculty-Driven Design to Advance Transfer Excellence

A LaGuardia Community College-Queens College Partnership Leveraging the U.S. Department of Education–Funded Queens STEM Academy (FY5) in parallel with the ASPEN-AASCU Transfer Intensive.

I. Summary

This proposal outlines a faculty-led, institutionally embedded initiative to design and launch discipline-specific STEM Academies serving transfer students from LaGuardia Community College (LAGCC) to Queens College (QC). Leveraging the U.S. Department of Education–funded Queens STEM Academy in its fifth year, this grant serves as a catalyst for a pilot that advances system-level transfer reform aligned with the Aspen Institute’s Transfer Playbook and Tackling Transfer frameworks.

Guided by Aspen’s three core strategies: (1) elevating transfer as an executive priority; (2) aligning program pathways and instruction between the community college and senior college; and (3) tailoring advising and nonacademic supports to meet transfer student needs. This initiative establishes a STEM academy with multiple disciplinary pathways, positioning faculty as the architects of sustainable, high-impact transfer models in Biology, Chemistry, Earth & Environmental Sciences, and Computer Science.

LAGCC-QC Transfer Academy building and strengthening is divided into three phases – Phase I - Preparing to Build, Phase II - Building the LaGuardia-Queens Pipeline, and Phase III - Launching the LaGuardia-Queens Transfer Academy. Phase I will commence with faculty planning work which will begin in Winter 2026 and will conclude by mid-August 2026. The planning work will contribute to the construction and implementation of the transfer academy framework in Phase II and Phase III of our joint endeavor.

Six faculty members will participate, each receiving up to \$6,000 (\$2,000 (Stipends) Spring 2026, \$4,000 (Summer Salary) Summer 2026) contingent on the completion of defined deliverables and milestones.

II. Background and Rationale

Nationally, fewer than one in five community-college starters earn a bachelor’s degree, despite a clear intention to do so. Aspen Institute research demonstrates that strong transfer outcomes are not driven by policy alone, but by institutional practice, faculty engagement, and durable cross-campus partnerships.

Queens College and LaGuardia Community College are geographically proximate institutions serving overlapping student populations – a condition Aspen identifies as a critical, yet often underleveraged, asset in achieving transfer excellence. Both institutions’ strategic plans explicitly emphasize student success, equitable outcomes, seamless pathways, faculty engagement, and data-guided decision-making.

This proposal responds directly to:

- **CUNY’s Strategic Plan (2023–2030)**, which centers transfer equity as a system-wide priority by advancing seamless transfer experiences, reducing credit loss, and closing equity gaps for students moving between CUNY colleges.
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- **LAGCC Strategic Plan (2025–2029)** priorities around increasing transfer, strengthening partnerships, improving advising coherence, and using data for continuous improvement.
- **QC Strategic Plan (2021–2026)** goals related to curriculum alignment, student success, DEI, and faculty scholarship integrated with teaching and learning.
- **Aspen-AASCU Institute’s** call for president-led, faculty-engaged, routinized transfer systems embedded within academic departments, advanced through the creation of a STEP design document that outlines a phased approach to developing, piloting, and scaling academic transfer practices.

III. Relationship to Strategic Transfer Excellence Plan (STEP)

The Building Transfer Academies Initiative functions as the faculty-led academic planning arm of the LaGuardia-Queens Strategic Excellence Plan (STEP). While STEP establishes the shared vision, goals, governance, and institutional commitments necessary for transfer reform, the Transfer Academies operationalize these priorities between the two institutions within academic departments through intentional, structured faculty work.

Together, STEP and the Building Transfer Academies Framework via USDOE Queens STEM Academy represent a coordinated strategy in which institutional leadership, professional staff, and faculty share responsibility for transfer student success. Faculty deliverables produced through this initiative directly advance STEP's measurable goals related to credit efficiency, academic momentum, timely transfer, and bachelor's degree completion.

IV. Conceptual Framework to Align with ASPEN-AASCU's Three (3) Strategies

ASPEN Strategy I: Prioritize Transfer at the Executive Level to Achieve Sustainable Success at Scale	ASPEN Strategy II: Align Program Pathways and High-Quality Instruction	ASPEN Strategy III: Tailor Transfer Advising and Nonacademic Supports
<p>This initiative operates under executive sponsorship at both institutions and is housed in the Office of the Provost, ensuring governance, funding alignment, and long-term sustainability beyond individual faculty transfer champions.</p> <p>Faculty work is intentionally structured, compensated, and milestone-driven to prevent transfer reform from relying on informal or uncompensated labor – an Aspen-identified risk to scale and durability.</p>	<p>Faculty teams will co-design major-specific, end-to-end transfer pathways, including course sequencing, gateway course alignment, skill expectations, and instructional assumptions.</p> <p>This work emphasizes learning progression within the major, not merely credit articulation, consistent with Aspen's findings that curricular coherence is essential to timely bachelor's completion.</p>	<p>Faculty pathway design will be intentionally translated into advising-ready artifacts and embedded into existing student-support ecosystems (e.g., Navigate, Brightspace, STEM Academy programming).</p> <p>This ensures transfer pathways are inevitable, understandable, and trusted by students – another Aspen hallmark of effective partnerships.</p>
<p>STEP Reform Strategy I: Queens College and LaGuardia Community College will jointly lead a formal, institutionally supported assessment of the transfer partnership, supported by leadership in institutional research, data-sharing agreements, and CUNYfirst tagging to track outcomes for LaGuardia–QC transfer students over time. This executive-level infrastructure ensures transfer reform is systematic, measurable, and sustainable beyond individual champions.</p>	<p>STEP Reform Strategy II: Through faculty summits, cross-campus convenings, and Transfer Academies, faculty from both institutions will co-develop aligned 2+2 degree maps, course equivalencies, and instructional expectations that maximize credit applicability and accelerate academic momentum. This work emphasizes curricular coherence and learning progression within majors – particularly in Teacher Education and Q-STEM – rather than fragmented course-by-course articulation.</p> <p>Faculty-designed pathways will be structured to preserve full-time momentum while also enabling part-time students to progress efficiently toward degree completion without excess credit accumulation or delayed entry into major coursework.</p>	<p>STEP Reform Strategy III: Queens College and LaGuardia Community College will implement an integrated, student-centered advising model – including an Advisor-in-Residence presence at the community college, proactive outreach, peer mentoring, and transition-focused engagement – to deliver consistent, embedded support before and after transfer. Transfer pathways will be translated into advising-ready tools and embedded within existing student support ecosystems to ensure they are clear, navigable, and trusted by students.</p>

V. Faculty Cohort and Compensation Structure

- Spring 2026: \$2,000 per faculty member (4 milestones × \$500, paid as faculty stipend)
- Summer 2026: \$4,000 per faculty member (4 milestones × \$1,000, paid as summer salary)
- Maximum per Faculty: \$6,000
- Completion of each milestone is required for payment; incomplete work disqualifies payment for that phase.

VI. Timeline and Milestones

Spring 2026 Milestones (January 2026 – May 2026)

Milestone	I. Faculty Exchange & Alignment Workshop (January 30 or February 13)	II. Draft or Refine Major-Specific Transfer & Career Pathway Maps (Products)	III. Instructional Alignment & Learning Outcomes Crosswalk Faculty-Guided Design Principles for Integrated Transfer Support (Structure and Strategy)	IV. Drafting Part I: Transfer Academy Framework Development
Milestone Description	<p>QC and LAGCC will jointly launch a formal assessment of the current transfer partnership, combining institutional data analysis with faculty-informed qualitative inquiry.</p> <p>Faculty will play a central role in identifying curricular friction points, advising gaps, and moments where students lose academic momentum prior to and after transfer.</p> <p>This faculty exchange will be hosted at LAGCC (QC faculty bussed to LAGCC) followed by a reciprocal LAGCC faculty visit to QC.</p>	<p>Faculty co-develop finalized, faculty-approved transfer degree maps that integrate academic sequencing, career pathways, and NACE career readiness competencies, in collaboration with Career Services and pre-professional advising teams.</p> <p>Updating Transfer Equivalencies coordinating with departmental T-Rex approvers.</p>	<p>Faculty from both campuses will collaboratively establish shared, discipline-specific design principles that define what “transfer-ready” academic progress looks like and identify intentional support structures that reinforce student momentum. This milestone centers on translating classroom realities into advising- and support-ready frameworks that guide instruction, advising, and co-curricular engagement across the transfer pathway.</p>	<p>Faculty teams will co-develop the foundational components of the Transfer Academy Framework, establishing a shared, discipline-informed structure for transfer pathways, academic progression, advising, and student engagement. This phase focuses on drafting the core architecture of the Academy model.</p>
Compensation	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
Primary Deliverables	<p>Written Memo: faculty-informed identified transfer barrier and assessment framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty-identified curricular misalignments and momentum loss points, alongside existing areas of curricular and instructional strength that support transfer student success and degree momentum 	<p>Updated Transfer Equivalencies on T-Rex</p> <p>Revised Major-Specific, Career-Infused Transfer Degree Map (PDF + editable)</p>	<p>Agreed-upon design principles for transfer-aligned advising and instruction</p>	<p>Draft Transfer Academy Framework (Part I) including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academy structure and duration • Required student milestones across the transfer lifecycle

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annotated discussion notes from LAGCC- and QC-hosted faculty exchanges, documenting both challenges and exemplary practices across disciplines Preliminary assessment domains (curriculum, advising, timing, student experience), including indicators of effective practice that can be scaled or replicated within the STEM Academy model 	<p>Career Pathway Alignment Summary (2–3 pathways per major)</p> <p>NACE Competency Mapping Table linking curriculum and co-curricular experiences</p>	<p>Establishment of faculty-validated “Transfer Readiness” academic progress and career benchmarks</p> <p>Discipline-specific priority support touchpoints (e.g., gateway courses, advising checkpoints, early alerts)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined faculty advising and mentoring roles Peer mentoring and career integration points <p>Identification of academic supports aligned to specific pathway milestones</p>
Submission Format	<p>Word (Editable)</p> <p>Joint faculty summary memo and annotated findings template</p>	<p>Word + Excel/Sheets working files</p>	<p>Word + Excel/Sheets working files</p>	<p>Draft Framework document (Part I) with discipline-specific sections.</p> <p>Word + Excel/Sheets working files</p>
Deadline	<p>March 13, 2026</p>	<p>April 17, 2026</p>	<p>May 8, 2026</p>	<p>May 29, 2026</p>
Assessment and Evaluation	<p>100% completion of both exchanges;</p> <p>documentation of actionable issues identified by faculty across disciplines.</p>	<p>TBA</p>	<p>TBA</p>	<p>TBA</p>

Summer 2026 Milestones (June 2026 – August 2026)

Milestone	V. Drafting Part II: Faculty Review, Refinement, and Endorsement	VI. Faculty–Administrator Co-Design of AY 2026–27 Implementation Plan	VII. Faculty Synthesis & Summit Preparation	VIII. LAGCC–QC Faculty Summit and Presentation of Phase I Outcomes
Milestone Description	Faculty teams will review, refine, and finalize the draft Transfer Academy Framework, ensuring disciplinary appropriateness, cross-campus alignment, and operational feasibility. This phase formalizes faculty endorsement and prepares the framework for administrative implementation planning.	Faculty teams work directly with campus administrators (advising, enrollment, IR, and student success leadership) to co-develop the AY 2026–27 implementation plan, ensuring academic design decisions are operationalized into scalable institutional practice.	Faculty teams synthesize assessment findings, pathway work, and Academy design into discipline-specific narratives and presentations. This milestone prepares faculty to serve as the primary interpreters of results and champions of the Transfer Academy model at the joint summit.	Faculty teams from LaGuardia Community College and Queens College will jointly present Phase I findings, the finalized Transfer Academy Framework, and discipline-specific pathway insights at the LAGCC–QC Faculty Summit. This milestone centers faculty as the primary interpreters of assessment results and designers of actionable next steps for AY 2026–27.
Compensation	\$1000	\$1000	\$1000	\$1000
Primary Deliverables	<p>Faculty feedback memo with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisions and recommended enhancements Areas of faculty consensus and alignment Implementation considerations <p>Revised, faculty-endorsed Transfer Academy Framework (Part II)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalized definition of faculty roles within the Academy model 	<p>Faculty-informed AY 2026–27 Implementation Plan sections</p> <p>Defined roles and responsibilities across faculty and administrative units</p> <p>Sequenced implementation timeline with academic checkpoints</p> <p>Resource and support needs aligned to faculty-identified priorities</p>	<p>Discipline-specific synthesis briefs</p> <p>Faculty presentation outlines and slide drafts</p> <p>Identified challenges, solutions, and implementation priorities for AY 2026–27</p> <p>Cross-campus alignment confirmation from faculty teams</p>	<p>Faculty-led summit presentations (discipline- or pathway-specific) summarizing assessment findings, identified curricular and advising friction points, and proposed solutions</p> <p>Presentation materials (slides and supporting artifacts) aligned to the Transfer Academy Framework</p> <p>Clear recommendations for AY 2026–27 implementation, communicated to campus leadership and summit attendees</p>
Submission Format	Faculty feedback memo and revised Framework document (Part II).	Word implementation draft (Editable)	Slides + supporting Word documents	
Deadline	June 30, 2026	July 31, 2026	August 31, 2026	September 2026 (Faculty Summit Convening)
Assessment & Evaluation		<p>Implementation plan reflects faculty recommendations and assessment data</p> <p>Administrative sign-off confirming feasibility and alignment</p>		

