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EDUCATION PROFILE

High Schoolers Get an Early Start on Higher Ed

BY DR. CLAUDIA V. SCHRADER

On Commencement Day last month, I joined 15 Kingsborough faculty members traveling across Brooklyn, Staten Islands, and The Bronx, bringing cheer and congratulations to 23 graduates of the class of 2021 and their families at their homes. I was fortunate to visit two graduates who would receive their college degrees later that day and their high school diploma a few days later. One of these students was Brian Lakhtarnik and his mother. In a few hours after my visit, he would be a college graduate and, in a matter of days, he would not only receive his high school diploma but do so as the Salutatorian of his graduating class. If that wasn't incredible enough, he told me that his goal is to go to law school and devote his life to fighting for women's rights! His mom, Lina Goldberg-Lakhtarnik, beamed with pride. It was clear that she did such a great job raising

this young man and that Kingsborough Early College Secondary School (KECSS) did a great job preparing him too.

KECSS is one of several high schools across our city offering students an opportunity to get a head start on their college education -- tuition-free. At KECCS, a grade 6-12 school, college prep begins in the middle grades, and students take their first college-level courses in the summer before entering ninth grade. Upperclassmen take courses at Kingsborough Community College (KCC) to earn an associate degree in liberal arts. The school was founded in September 2006 through a partnership with the Early College Initiative of the City University of New York (CUNY). High school students have access to KCC's theater, playing fields, science labs, computer labs, art studios, and more. The high school has an advisory program to help students keep up



I enjoyed meeting Kingsborough Early College Secondary School's Salutatorian Brian Lakhtarnik, and his mother, Lina Goldberg-Lakhtarnik, on Commencement Day.

with the academic and behavioral expectations of college coursework.

The school collaborates with other schools to offer Advanced Placement

courses. Most students who graduate with an associate degree go on to achieve their bachelor's degree. KECCS provides students and families with college awareness opportunities, including college trips and student workshops.

Another benefit, whether a student receives an associate degree or college credits as they enter four-year colleges, is that their cost of a college degree is significantly reduced because they participated in the Early College program. In addition, the experience builds the student's confidence in their ability to be successful at the college level. I have no doubt that Brian is ready and will be successful during the next leg of his educational journey!

Dr. Claudia V. Schrader is president of Kingsborough Community College (KCC), a 72-acre academic oasis located in beautiful Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn.