

## **Executive Summary: What Makes Bard College Distinctive**

Leon Botstein

Building on its 150-year history as a small independent liberal arts undergraduate institution, during the past four decades Bard College has transformed its scope and mission. As of 2014, more than 1,900 undergraduates study in Annandale; more than 1,500 students study in dual-degree programs on our international campuses in Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Germany, and the West Bank; 600 graduate students study in small distinctive MA and Ph.D. programs; and more than 1,200 students are enrolled in Bard's high school early colleges. Bard has developed a unique global network of university collaboration. It has pioneered in the role of the arts in the university and in society.

Bard College has defined a role for colleges and universities at the intersection of education and civil society. Bard reflects a commitment to innovation and a fundamental belief that private colleges and universities can and should operate in the public interest in a manner that brings renewed significance to the intellectual, artistic, and curricular traditions of the university.

The following programs distinguish Bard:

**1) Bard High School Early Colleges (BHSEC): Enabling Students to Reach Their Full Intellectual Potential.** Bard College entered the field of the articulation between secondary schooling and higher education in 1979, when Simon's Rock, the first residential early college, became part of Bard. In 2001, the New York City Department of Education invited Bard to open the first high school early college in lower Manhattan as a public, not a charter, school. BHSEC expanded in 2008 to include a second campus in Queens. In 2008, a similar program was established: the Bard Early College in New Orleans Program offers one year of college coursework. And, in 2011, a full four-year BHSEC opened in Newark, New Jersey. In 2013, Bard launched an early college program at the Harlem Children's Zone in New York City. The BHSECs provide a unique educational opportunity: students begin the four-year BHSEC program as ninth graders and take two years of an innovative high school curriculum designed to prepare them for the rigors of the college program. In their junior and senior years of high school, students enter into Year 1 and Year 2, respectively, of the early college program. At the end of the 12th grade, students graduate with both a public high school diploma and an AA degree from Bard, having earned 60 tuition-free college credits. Bard awards more than \$10 million a year in college credits to BHSEC students at no cost to them. The BHSEC program is a model for transforming secondary school education, one that consistently eliminates the expectations and preparation gaps between high school and college, particularly for underserved populations. The BHSECs have a higher than 98 percent high school graduation rate. Nearly 94 percent of graduates complete a BA (nearly 40 percent higher than the national average), and, according to the National Student Clearinghouse, 35 percent of BHSEC graduates (Classes of 2005–2011) have earned a bachelor's degree in a STEM field. Bard anticipates opening BHSEC programs during the next three years in Cleveland, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles.

**2) Bard's International Dual-Degree Programs and International Education: Advancing the Theory and Practice of International Liberal Arts Education.** Bard's long-term international partnerships are characterized by the exchange of students, faculty, and curriculum—culminating in dual-degree and dual-credit programs. Bard has programs in Russia, Kyrgyzstan, the West Bank, and Germany. Smolny College, a 17-year-old collaboration between Bard and St. Petersburg State

University, is one the longest running dual-degree programs between an American and a Russian institution of higher education. Smolny has become Russia's first Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and is recognized widely as a model of a new approach to education in the Russian Federation. The Al Quds–Bard Partnership is the largest Palestinian-American program in higher education and the only American dual-degree program on the West Bank. Bard has an honors college at Al-Quds and the dual-degree Master of Arts in Teaching Program (MAT) trains in-service teachers and is the largest graduate program on the West Bank. Bard College Berlin is a liberal arts university offering a core, interdisciplinary undergraduate curriculum primarily for non-North American students. It began as the European College of the Liberal Arts. Students come to Berlin from nearly 40 countries in order to study with an international faculty. In Bishkek, capital of the Kyrgyz Republic, a dual-degree program between Bard and the American University of Central Asia offers a multidisciplinary, international learning community that aims to develop leaders for the democratic transformation of Central Asia.

**3) The Bard Prison Initiative (BPI): Creating the Opportunity for Incarcerated Men and Women to Earn a Bard College Degree.** The largest program of its kind in the United States, BPI currently enrolls 275 incarcerated men and women across a full spectrum of academic disciplines and offers more than 60 courses each semester in New York State. By 2013, Bard granted nearly 275 AA and BA degrees to BPI participants and enrolled more than 500 students. The rate of post-release employment among the program's participants is high and recidivism is stunningly low. By challenging incarcerated men and women with a liberal education, BPI works to redefine the relationship between educational opportunity and criminal justice. In a speech given February 16, 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo highlighted Bard's work when he announced plans to support ten college-in-prison programs across New York State. BPI is currently working with governors in other states who are reconsidering policy shifts to broaden educational access to prisoners. The Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison was created by BPI to support other innovative college-in-prison programs throughout the country. Five colleges have established programs, bringing total enrollment nationally to nearly 700 by the end of 2014. The Consortium plans to establish programs in as many as ten more states.

**4) Citizen Science: Promoting Science Literacy and Understanding about the Link between Science and Citizenship.** Citizen Science, now in its fourth year, brings all first-year Bard students to campus for a required and rigorous three-week January workshop that serves as a model for general education in science in the United States and abroad. Students attending Citizen Science focus on a single issue—infectious disease—and in an all-day every day curriculum discover how science is conducted and functions. They also participate in projects that promote collaboration, problem solving, leadership, ethical decision making, and scientific literacy. The Citizen Science program includes a wide array of engagement activities in the local community. Among the highlights are programs in area schools that engage more than 2,000 children in hands-on science activities with Bard students during Science Education Days. In addition, more than 400 Bard students partnered with more than 50 local agencies during the MLK Day of Engagement, part of United We Stand, President Obama's national call to service.

**5) The Institute for Writing and Thinking (IWT): Transforming the Practice of Writing.** IWT grew out the need to address a growing, widespread inability on the part of students to express their sophisticated ideas in writing. The IWT runs the Workshop in Language and Thinking (L&T), the mandatory, three-week session (similar to Citizen Science) for all incoming first-year Bard students, what the *New York Times* called a "boot camp for writers." The mission of IWT is to train high school and college faculty at workshops, conferences, and on-site consultations to help students think

more deeply and to read challenging texts more closely through writing. Since IWT's founding, a diverse faculty representing the fields of composition, literature, philosophy, art, and science continue to develop and refine writing practices. More than 300,000 high school and college faculty have benefited from IWT training since the mid-1980s. IWT has had a tremendous impact internationally, with its liberating emphasis on ideas and expression serving as an antidote to traditions of rote learning. It now has affiliates in Russia and the West Bank.

**6) The Bard Music Festival (BMF) and SummerScape: Inspiring Artistic Excellence.** BMF, part of the annual SummerScape performing arts festival, is an internationally acclaimed festival focusing on the work and world of a single composer each season. It has been praised, year in and year out, by the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. The BMF brings performance and scholarship together. This summer marks the 25th anniversary of Bard's festival, which was founded to expand and diversify the audience for classical music by offering thematic programs that appeal to both seasoned concertgoers and newcomers to the concert hall. The BMF has been widely recognized for its thought-provoking programming and excellence. In addition, each year for the past decade a major production of a neglected operatic masterpiece is produced. In collaboration with the Princeton University Press, a major volume of scholarship on the featured composer has been published since 1991, resulting in the most important continuing monograph series in music history in the English language.

**6) The Bard College Conservatory of Music and the Longy School of Music of Bard: Providing Preparation for a Life in the Creation and Performance of Music.** The unique curriculum of The Bard College Conservatory of Music is guided by the principle that musicians should be broadly educated in the liberal arts and sciences. The Conservatory offers six distinct programs: an undergraduate program, a five-year program requiring two degrees: the bachelor of music and the bachelor of arts in a field other than music; the Graduate Vocal Arts Program (headed by Dawn Upshaw); the Graduate Conducting Program; the Postgraduate Collaborative Piano Fellowship, the Preparatory Division; and the Conductors Institute. The Conservatory offers unparalleled musical opportunities for its students. The Conservatory orchestra performs regularly on campus, in New York City, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Asia, and Europe. Students frequently perform alongside faculty in chamber music concerts at Bard, in regional chamber music concert series, and in concerts for the Bard Music Festival and with the American Symphony Orchestra. Longy, in collaboration with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, has become the central training ground for the American adaptations of El Sistema, the strategy developed in Venezuela to use music as a means to radically improve aspirations and opportunities faced by underserved children.

**8) MFA, BGC, CCS: Transforming the Graduate Training of Artists and the Place of the Arts.** Bard has one of the world's most sought-after and competitive MFA programs. It is entirely interdisciplinary. Its attraction rests in the fact that the work of aspiring visual artists, writers, and musicians is critiqued by all disciplines in the arts. The Center for Curatorial Studies has developed the leading training program in the world for future curators working in the field of twentieth-century and contemporary art. The Bard Graduate Center offers MA and [REDACTED] degrees in the history of the decorative arts, design and material culture.