

BROOKLYN WATERFRONT RESEARCH CENTER

New York City College of Technology, City University of New York
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About the BWRC

Over the past five years, faculty members at New York City College of Technology have received a series of grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation to support the exploration of one of Brooklyn's most understudied and underutilized assets: its historic waterfront. Using a multi-disciplinary approach, participants in these grants have examined the past and present of Brooklyn's industrial waterways from social, political, historical, literary, and scientific perspectives.

The grants the college has received have included two \$60,000 faculty development grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to study and develop curriculum on the literature and history of the Brooklyn waterfront. It has also received a \$140,000 NEH grant to run a summer institute on the landmarks of Brooklyn's industrial waterfront for community college teachers from around the country, and a \$200,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to create a series of courses at City Tech that investigate the effects of climate change on the Brooklyn waterfront. These courses will be made available to science programs in other colleges and to the secondary schools. The College is currently in the first year of a 3 million dollar U.S. Department of Education Title V grant revamping general education at the college and using the Brooklyn Waterfront as a "living laboratory" for those courses.

The focus on the Brooklyn waterfront coincides with New York City's Waterfront Vision and Enhancement Strategy (WAVES) that includes a Waterfront Action Agenda developed by the Department of Environmental Protection and a comprehensive waterfront plan, *Vision 20/20*, produced by the Department of City Planning.

These city initiatives and the already-mentioned national grants have created an opportunity to address the needs of its students and neighbors by founding a research center devoted to the interdisciplinary, place-based study of Brooklyn's historic waterfront. The three-fold mission of this newly formed **Brooklyn Waterfront Research Center** includes research, education, and public outreach.

Missions: Research, Education, Public Outreach

Through Its Research Mission, the Center

- supports faculty research fellows
- supports undergraduate and graduate research fellows (students will work with faculty members on research projects, participate in seminars, and assist in the archiving and digitizing of various historical materials)
- engages City Tech's Ursula C. Schwerin Library as an archival repository for locally-based/endangered industrial records/archives related to the Brooklyn waterfront. The Center also works with the Brooklyn Historical Society on these issues.

Through Its Educational Mission, the Center

- develops examples and models of place-based education
- makes technology (GIS, mapping work, open platforms) central to its mission by producing tools and content that can then be used in courses
- works with public schools on the development of place-based curriculum
- offers summer workshops for faculty of public schools (cf. *Along the Shore*).

Through Its Public Outreach Mission, the Center

- offers public lectures, seminars, and forums that inform public dialogue on issues related to Brooklyn's historic waterfront
- participates in events such as the annual City of Water Day
- joins with community groups to develop waterfront-based arts programming
- creates cultural exchanges among local colleges and institutions and organizes public events that explore connections between the historical past and the industrial present of waterfront locations such as the Greenpoint Manufacturing Center, the Brooklyn Navy Yard, Red Hook's commercial center, and the Newtown Creek Conservancy.

For more information about the Center and its work, please contact Richard E. Hanley, Director, at rhanley@citytech.cuny.edu