

Metro|Region

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A multicultural education

Strength of Cambridge College lies in its diverse student body

By Anthony Flint
GLOBE STAFF

CAMBRIDGE — It is a long way from Boston's inner city, this unremarkable set of powder-blue buildings behind the Crate & Barrel store on Brattle Street.

But Cambridge College, a small adult graduate school, has in recent years become a vital institution in the grass-roots war against economic despair and violence in Boston.

A glance at the alumni list tells much of the story: Georgette Watson, founder of Dorchester's Drop-a-Dime anticrime program, attended; so did Kattie Portis, Boston coordinator for Women's AIDS Risk Network and founder of the drug rehabilitation program Women Inc., and city Councilor Bruce Bolling.

Those are the leaders and role models; there are others who have qui-



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / LANE TURNER

Rose Arthur makes a point during class at Cambridge College.

etly become individual successes, like Janet Johnson, who at 17 was an inmate at Framingham State Prison, got

her master's degree at Cambridge and is now a parole supervisor for the
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state, or David Bryant, who was down and out before he received a degree and became a counselor at Baldpate Hospital in Georgetown.

Cambridge College, which held its commencement yesterday, is a nontraditional graduate school for working adults. Students take courses in the evening and on weekends for a master's degree in education, with possible subspecialties in counseling or management. As an added attraction, those without an undergraduate degree can credit for "life and work experience" as well as college courses they have taken.

The school, behind Brattle Street storefronts on Mifflin Place, gives middle-managers, working mothers and entrepreneurs a chance to jumpstart their career or start a business of their own through an advanced degree. But over the years, it has become notable as a place of diversity; at least 50 percent of those enrolled are minorities.

That, the school's supporters say, is Cambridge College's great strength: students learn to work in a multicultural mix, and when they graduate they often become community activists, whether in the schools, as founders of halfway houses or counseling centers, or in business.

"If we're going to affect the problems of inner city, it's going to be through leadership and community infrastructure, and the Cambridge College graduates are by far and away the leaders who are working the community institutions," said Ronald A. Homer, president of the Boston Bank of Commerce and chairman of the college's board of trustees. "It's not the graduates of Harvard or even UMass-Amherst."

President Eileen Moran Brown, who has shepherded the school since its beginnings in 1971, said the school's policies on diversity could be an example for other public and community institutions.

"I really believe we have a model for the future here," Brown, 52, said. "It's a model for what has to happen in this city. Downtown is two miles from Roxbury, and the two never communicate. Yet we all have something to learn from each other. If we're going to solve the problems of our community, we must learn how to function in a multicultural world."

The approach has been compelling enough to attract several national foundations who are interested in

Cambridge College as a model school for other urban areas, according to several observers.

"We want to put our money into institutions that directly treat problems and can, in fact, make a difference," said Bayard Waring, director of the Amelia Peabody Foundation.

"I'm fascinated by the caliber of the people coming out of that place. They're going back and becoming role models for kids whose only role models are basketball players and preachers," he said. "The young people can see they can succeed in business or public service. I think that's vitally important."

The college had its genesis when Brown, a Pennsylvania public schoolteacher who had fought many wars against racism in college admissions and the schools, was asked to create an education program for Newton College of the Sacred Heart in 1971.

The program expanded and in 1973 became affiliated with Antioch University; Brown convinced Harvard's School of Education, where she received her degree in 1970, to lend her classroom and library space.

Then, in 1981, Cambridge College became a free-standing, degree-granting accredited college, largely due to money from the Rockefeller family. Peggy Dulany, David Rockefeller's daughter, was a founding member of the board of trustees.

Today, the college has a staff of 41, a full- and part-time faculty of 60, and a budget of \$3.8 million, with an endowment of about \$1 million and a capital campaign in the works. Brown spends most of her time raising money to keep the place running and to keep tuition at \$7,650; more than \$1.1 million was raised last year.

To a large extent, Cambridge has carved its niche by going after nontraditional students: older, from enormously varied academic backgrounds, and almost exclusively working full-time. Students share the common trait of feeling they are in a rut at work, or perhaps more seriously, of being a minority ill-served in the white-dominated world.

"What it said to me was, now that I have this piece of paper, this degree, I have a certain legitimacy," said Benjamin Thompson, who served time for an armed robbery conviction in New York and is now a Cambridge College graduate and chairman of Boston's Board of Election Commissioners. "That's impor-

tant, psychologically and economically."

The teaching emphasizes class participation. The students start classes at 6 p.m.; on a recent night, students settled around a discussion table littered with brown-bag dinners and Diet Pepsi cans for a sociology class that focused on conflict resolution.

"I decided that this was the year I was really going to do it, get a master's and move ahead," said one woman in the class, a woman with grown children. "But I didn't want to compete with 21-year-olds."

There are seemingly enough people who in one way or another fit this mold: enrollment at Cambridge College is up from 330 in 1987 to 550 last year, a sharp contrast to dwindling enrollments at other New England colleges.

The steady enrollment bodes well for the school.

But those close to Cambridge College say it deserves more recognition for what it can do for the city, and the multicultural model it could be for the capital of higher education.

"We have the highest concentration of higher education institutions in the country, yet we've done a very poor job of educating minorities," said Arthur Levine, the former president of Bradford College now at Harvard's Education Management Institute. "Cambridge College shows it is very possible to attract minorities to higher education and offer a curriculum that meets their needs. We need that example."

Most contributions for the school, however, come from individuals and foundations in New York, not Boston, leaving some to marvel at how such a program in Boston's backyard could go unnoticed for so long.

CAMBRIDGE COLLEGE
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1990 JUN 20 PM 5:26

EILEEN MORAN BROWN
PRESIDENT
June 14, 1990

CAMBRIDGE MA.

Ms. Alice Wolf
The Honorable City Council
City Clerks Office
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Alice,

Cambridge College has had such a spectacular year that we would like to invite you to attend a CELEBRATION OF THE DISTANCE TRAVELLED by our extraordinary institution. It will be held on Thursday, June 28th from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. on the fourth floor of One Mifflin Place.

During the past year, the College has enrolled its largest class ever; we raised the largest number of gifts and grants; the academic programs moved to our beautiful new location at One Mifflin Place, just to name a few highlights.

I hope you can join trustees, faculty, staff and friends to celebrate. Please call Judy Bowe in my office at (617) 354-0033 if you plan to attend. I look forward to seeing you.

With every good wish,

Sincerely,

I hope you can come.

Eileen
Eileen Moran Brown
President

P.S. In case you missed us in the May 21st Boston Globe, I am enclosing a copy.

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Comm. from Eileen Moran Brown, President,
Cambridge College, extending an invitation
to the City Council to attend a CELEBRATION
OF THE DISTANCE TRAVELLED on Thursday,
June 28th from 3:30 p. m. to 5:30 p. m. at
One Mifflin Place.

In City Council,

June 25, 1990

Placed on file