



College Readiness and Success Programs in New York City

Executive Summary

September, 2011

"We've seen students with all kinds of academic records flourish in college with the right supports."

Observation by a program officer at a Manhattan-based program

Results from the Graduate NYC! Program Survey

Introduction

Graduate NYC! (GNYC!) is a collaboration among the City University of New York (CUNY), the NYC Department of Education (NYCDOE), the NYC Office of the Mayor, and a range of external partner organizations delivering college readiness and success services citywide. The initiative is funded by a three-year grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. For more information please visit www.gradnyc.com.

To learn more about available student supports GNYC! conducted a survey of NYC programs working with youth to increase college readiness and success rates. Over a four-week period the survey was sent to 253 agencies and 156 programs in NYC responded. The survey collected information in the following areas: populations served, funding, available programming, program structures, data collection, communication, and professional development. The majority of the respondents' programs were located in Manhattan (45%) or Brooklyn (23%).

The purpose of this Executive Summary is to outline key findings and indicate possible implications. Please note, some respondents did not answer every question, therefore percentages included are based on the number of respondents who answered a given question. For full survey results, please contact GNYC! at graduatenyc@mail.cuny.edu.

Populations served

Most respondents work with students who are in high school or working toward a GED (95%). The majority of programs indicated that the students they serve are ages 17-19 (77%-90%), and majority female (49%). Of programs who serve black students, 39% serve mostly black students, and of the programs who serve Latino students, 32% serve mostly Latinos. More detailed information on populations served is as follows:

- *School status:* 45% of all programs surveyed also serve students who have already graduated with a high school diploma or GED but are not yet enrolled in college, and only 38% serve students enrolled in college.
- *Program eligibility:* The top three categories used to determine eligibility for program participants are age (39%), status as a high school student (21%), and income (21%).

Funding

72% of programs estimated a program budget of more than \$100,000. Of the programs that identified the source of their funding, city contracts (61%) and foundations (51%) were the most often cited.

Available programming

Almost all programs provide services free of charge (95%), and deliver services at their organization (75%) after school (73%). Participants are most likely to be engaged in programming 2-3 times per week during the academic year (35%). In addition, many programs deliver services at a public school (59%), and offer services during the summer(63%).

Most programs offer a range of services in the following areas: short- and long-term personal goal setting, academic preparation, and development of personal & academic behaviors, as well as contextual skills & awareness. The majority of programming (e.g. college exploration, test preparation, critical thinking) is delivered in group settings. Only college application (53%), FAFSA completion (51%), and support services related to college retention (46%) are most often delivered in one-on-one counseling sessions. The services that were offered by the fewest number of programs were CUNY assessment test preparation (51%) and preparatory college level math (57%). When asked if programs offer some type of monetary support to participants, the two most common answers among those who responded were transportation/Metrocards (77%) or cash stipend (51%).

Program structures

The most common staff roles at the programs surveyed are counselors and teachers. Of the programs who responded to the question about college counselors, 72% have at least one college counselor, and most have 1-3 (59%). When asked about the number of counselors (other than college counselors) on staff, most of those who responded (88%) have at least one counselor, more specifically, the majority has 1-3 counselors (49%). Additionally, 71% of programs have certified teachers on staff; 27% of these programs employ more than 10 (mainly school-based).

Data collection

The majority of programs surveyed collect student-level data about college readiness and success (91%). Approximately 69% of programs collect participant's unique identifiers, such as Social Security Numbers or NYC public school "OSIS" numbers (50%). The majority of student level data collected is related to college access but not related to college persistence or success. Approximately 79% of respondents collect proof of high school graduation or GED attainment, as opposed to only 48% who collect proof of college enrollment, and 30% who collect data on persistence to second semester. Of the 138 programs that responded to a question regarding how they collect data, student self-report was the most common (81%). Programs that identified a challenge in collecting student data, said that the two greatest challenges are lack of staff time (66%) and the collection of most data by student self-report (57%).

Communication

We asked programs where they receive their information about college readiness and postsecondary planning.

Of the websites identified as resources, the most common were: CUNY.edu (92%), FAFSA.gov (78%), CollegeBoard.org (72%) and SUNY.edu (70%). Additionally, in response to a question regarding staff who can communicate with students and families in languages other than English, 90% of programs indicated that they have staff who speak Spanish. Staff who spoke a range of other languages were reported, but by a limited number of programs.

Professional development (PD)

Most programs are interested in learning more about the transition to college (72%), and prefer half-day workshops (65%). Other topics of interest for PD are career and college exploration (66%), financial aid counseling (65%), and college applications and admissions (60%). Out of the programs that identified currently providing some sort of PD for their staff, most turn to non-profits as providers (93%). More specifically, 30% of programs identified Goddard Riverside as their provider. Other than non-profits, programs also use CUNY (34%) and membership organizations (19%).

Implications

Based on the survey responses, we can infer that while not many programs are currently serving students beyond high school, they have an interest in professional development related to college persistence, and access to/use of college data indicators. To that end, GNYC! will explore the possibility of convening of a learning community related to professional development and developing tools to support program work with students and families.

It is also clear that program respondents are expending a lot of staff time using every possible method to communicate with students and families, with varying levels of perceived success. To address the specific challenge of collecting student data, GNYC! is exploring the effect of the collection of Social Security and/or OSIS numbers on the possibility of data sharing. To address the common use of websites like the CUNY colleges and FAFSA.gov for information, GNYC! aims aid in the promotion of student-friendly information on the CUNY website, as well as moving to centralize important content for students, families and professionals, about college preparedness, access, enrollment and success in one, easy-to-access place.

These survey responses are just a glimpse into the work happening across the city, and further support that deeper investigation of programs is warranted in order to truly understand the depth and complexity of each program, and its impact on student success.