A College Degree Matters

Despite the City’s efforts, too many students are not completing college. Understanding the local and national consequences of this, the City University of New York (CUNY), the NYC Department of Education (DOE), the NYC Mayor’s Office, and a range of external partners have committed to ‘doubling the number’ of CUNY graduates by 2020. The ambitious 2020 goals set by New York City leaders are:

Increase the percentage of high school graduates achieving a 75+ on Math & English Regents from: 46% of 2009 graduates to 75% 2020 graduates.

Increase the percentage of high school graduates enrolling immediately in college from: 58% of 2009 graduates to 70% 2020 graduates.

Increase degree attainment:
Associate Degree:
- In 3-Years: From 10% of students entering in 2006 to 25% of students entering in 2017.
- In 4-Years: From 15% of students entering in 2005 to 40% of students entering in 2016.

Baccalaureate Degree:
- In 6-Years: From 47% of students entering in 2003 to 61% of students entering in 2014.

To reach these goals, Graduate NYC! must be a citywide effort, bringing together the leadership, expertise, and commitment of all those who aim to help students achieve college success. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Gates) Communities Learning in Partnership grant, Graduate NYC! College Readiness & Success aims to address the key problems hindering student success, such as; academic preparedness, financial aid access, and college knowledge and navigation. This initiative also aims to improve coordination across community-based providers and push for institutional improvements at CUNY and DOE.

Graduate NYC! Major Milestones

Planning Phase: Gates awarded NYC a $250,000 planning grant for the period November, 2009 through June, 2010. Five working committees developed recommendations to address academic alignment; college awareness and planning; research and data sharing; accountability and sustainability; and needs of partners outside of CUNY and DOE also working in this field. These committees were integral in the development of a citywide Action Plan to increase college success submitted to Gates in June, 2010. In September, Gates awarded NYC’s proposal $3 million over a three-year period to implement the Action Plan.

2010–2011: The NYC College Readiness and Success effort was rebranded as Graduate NYC! College Readiness & Success. In line with the Action Plan, Graduate NYC! created seven project-based teams: Reading & Writing Proficiency, Math Proficiency, Transition Programs, FAFSA and Financial Aid, Internal Advisement Capacity, External Awareness, and Data Operations. Each team was chaired by a combination of senior CUNY, DOE, and community organization leadership and produced deliverables ranging from catalogs of current activities and recommendations to new data collection and analysis, many of which are available on the Graduate NYC! website www.gradnyc.com.
Key public products from 2010-2011 included:

- **Graduate NYC! Program Survey**: A survey of NYC-based programs working with youth to support college readiness, access, transition and success rates to understand who they are serving and what services are being provided.

- **Postsecondary Readiness and Success Programs and Services**: An initial listing of programs and services available to NYC students and youth that provide postsecondary readiness and support.

- **Graduate NYC! Advisor Survey**: A survey of professional staff members at CUNY, whose primary duty is to deliver advisement services to students. Responses were collected about training, utilization and communication, practice and structure, access to information, developmental education, and job satisfaction. The survey results will be utilized at CUNY to improve advisement services.

- **Professional Development for College Readiness and Success Counseling**: Collection of information on professional development available to college readiness and success counseling staff.

- **Graduate NYC! Student and Family Focus Groups**: Graduate NYC! Conducted eight focus groups of NYC high school and college students, parents of high school and college students and young adults ages 16 to 25 not currently attending high school or college. The purpose of these groups was to collect attitudes and perceptions about college readiness, and barriers to enrollment and college completion.

**2011-2012:** Informed by the foundation created in the previous year, Graduate NYC! worked with CUNY, DOE, and the Mayor’s Office throughout the summer to identify key priorities within the institutions to advance the ‘double the numbers’ goals, integrate the recommendations and research into these activities, and where there are gaps outline the scope of collaborative work to be accomplished by Graduate NYC!. This year, Graduate NYC! will focus on several major projects:

- **Engage in High school (Grade 12) and college curriculum (developmental and 1st credit-bearing) alignment** in reading and writing and math. The goal is to develop using a team of high school teachers and college faculty, and widely disseminating across CUNY and DOE. As well as, creating a new structure for ongoing teacher/faculty collaboration.

- **Development academic intervention for high school students in their Junior and Senior years not on track to be college ready**. The goal is to pilot the program this summer and fall, and look to scale across CUNY and DOE in 2013-2014.

- **Development of NYC-specific college knowledge, access and success web resource** for students and parents, and online learning community for youth development/college support professionals. The goal is to launch the resource in Spring, 2012.

- **Design “Academy” for professionals** working with students in NYC to support professional and organizational development to improve student college transition and success services within the five boroughs. The Goal is to launch series in Spring, 2012.

- **Completion of a data warehouse** to hold CUNY and DOE student data, by Summer, 2012.

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