

CUNY ASAP Doubles Graduation Rates and Saves Taxpayer Dollars

Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) is one of the most successful community college completion programs in the nation. The Obama Administration cited CUNY ASAP as the type of evidence-based program more colleges should adopt. Numerous evaluations have demonstrated some of the greatest impacts of any community college reform strategy. This brief summarizes findings from several reports: “Doubling Graduation Rates,” a random assignment evaluation released by MDRC in 2015; “Benefit-Cost Analysis of CUNY ASAP” released by the Teachers College at Columbia University in 2013; “Evidence From Six Cohorts and Lessons for Expansion”, an internal evaluation of CUNY ASAP’s first six cohorts and “ASAP Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Pell Status”, an internal evaluation released in 2016.

Key Evaluation Findings

“Doubling Graduation Rates” (MDRC, 2015)

- By the end of the study period, **40% of the program group had received a degree**, compared with 22% of the control group
- Compared to CUNY’s standard program, **ASAP nearly doubled 3-year graduation rates for the group in the study.**

“Benefit-Cost Analysis of CUNY ASAP” (Teacher’s College, 2013)

- Taxpayers see a financial return to ASAP over the long term. **For each dollar invested in ASAP, there are roughly \$3.50 in returns** due to tax revenues resulting from higher employment rates, and savings from a reduced need for public services.
- The **income gains from participation in CUNY ASAP** are about about **\$146,000 for each additional graduate in ASAP**, compared to \$138,000 for each additional graduate in the comparison group.

“Evidence From Six Cohorts and Lessons for Expansion” & “ASAP Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Pell Status” (CUNY, 2016)

- For the cohorts studied in 2015/16, ASAP students had a **3-year graduation rate of 52%**, compared with 27% for the propensity-score matched comparison group.
- **Students reported being either satisfied or very satisfied** with the career and employment specialists (89.9%) and ASAP seminars/workshops (91.4%).
- ASAP students of all races and genders graduated at high rates. Notably, the 3-year graduation rate for **black male students was 47.0% and for Hispanic male students was 46.7%** (compared to 20.8% and 18.2% for their peers in the comparison group, respectively)

What is CUNY ASAP?

With support from New York City’s Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) and the City University of New York (CUNY), the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) was launched in 2007. Recognizing the importance of a college degree in today’s labor market, ASAP is designed to accelerate degree completion.

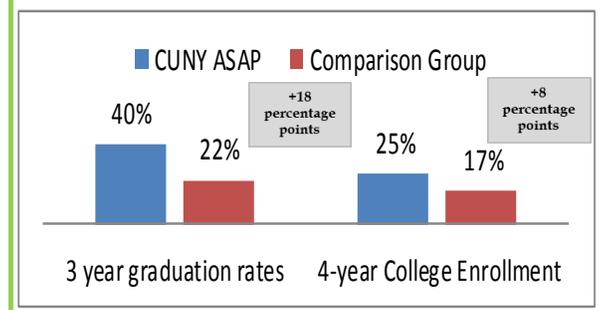
ASAP serves both students who are deemed “college-ready” and those in need of remedial coursework. ASAP offers comprehensive support services and financial resources as a means to remove barriers to full-time study, to build student resiliency, and to assist students on the path to graduation.

Key elements of ASAP include:

- full-time study in an ASAP eligible major,
- required participation in a cohort,
- consolidated course schedules to facilitate attendance,
- Comprehensive, personalized advisement,
- academic support services, career counseling, and special programs to support personal and professional development

ASAP also provides incentives to encourage student retention, such as tuition waivers for financial-aid eligible students, free MetroCards to eliminate transportation costs, and vouchers to reduce the cost of textbooks for students.

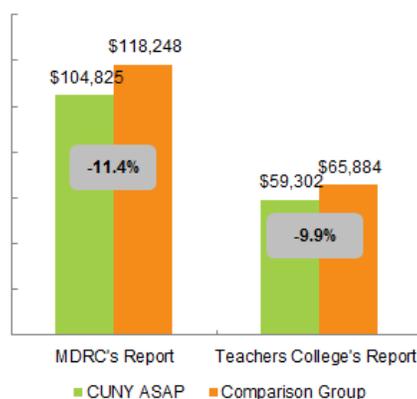
“Doubling Graduation Rates” (MDRC) Spring / Fall 2010 Cohorts at Select Colleges



ASAP Advances Student Achievement

- **ASAP students earned 8.7 more total credits**, on average, over 3 years (3-4 credits is equivalent to 1 course at most CUNY undergraduate institutions). ASAP students earned an average of 47.7 total credits, while control group students earned an average of 39 total credits – a 22% increase in credit accumulation over three years (MDRC).
- **ASAP leads to a 16.5 percentage point increase in students completing developmental coursework in their first semester.** After three years, 74% of ASAP students had completed their remedial education requirements, compared to 55% of control group members. These findings were particularly significant due to the financial burden of developmental courses, for which students must pay tuition, but which are non-credit bearing, forcing students to use a disproportionate amount of financial aid for courses that do not count towards graduation (MDRC).
- **ASAP students re-enrolled at a higher rate (81.3%)** in the third semester than comparison group students (73.8%). The difference in full-time enrollment is even larger, likely a result of the fact that ASAP requires students to enroll full-time every semester and provides resources and support to enable students to do so (CUNY).

Cost Effectiveness of ASAP and Cost per Graduate



- When the cost of operating ASAP, student services, and financial supports are considered, CUNY invested \$16,284 more per ASAP student than in other types of students. However, **the cost per graduate was less for ASAP students** due to the higher 3-year graduation rate found by both evaluation studies.
- **Students receive a positive return on every dollar that they personally invest in their education.** Each dollar invested is shown to generate a return in the form of both future earnings and employment—even after accounting for foregone earnings due to full-time enrollment in ASAP.

Looking Ahead

- Based on the promising results of ASAP to date, the de Blasio Administration is investing over \$200 million to **expand ASAP to serve 25,000 students per year by the 2018-19 academic year.**
- Starting in fall 2015, ASAP made a special recruitment effort to **serve students in Science, Technology, and Math (STEM) majors.**
- Bronx Community College will **fully adopt the ASAP model for all eligible students** by academic year 2018-19.
- **Three community colleges in Ohio are replicating the ASAP model** with technical assistance from CUNY. MDRC is conducting an implementation and random assignment evaluation of these programs.
- With the support of CEO and the Robin Hood Foundation, the John Jay College of Criminal Justice launched **Accelerate, Complete, and Engage (ACE)**, a program based on the principles of the ASAP model designed to increase timely graduation for baccalaureate students.

Further Reading

- MDRC, February 2015. '[Doubling Graduation Rates: Three-Year Effects of CUNY's ASAP for Developmental Education Students](#)'
- Teachers College, Columbia University, May 2013. '[Benefit-Cost Analysis of Accelerated Study in ASAP Of CUNY](#)'
- CUNY, September 2016, '[ASAP Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Pell Status](#)'
- CUNY, January 2012. '[Results Thus Far and the Road Ahead: A Follow-Up Report on CUNY ASAP](#)'
- CUNY, November 2016, '[CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs \(ASAP\): Evidence from Six Cohorts and Lessons for Expansion](#)'

For more information about CEO, please visit: <http://www.nyc.gov/ceo>