CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (CUNY ASAP)
A Program of the City University of New York

PROGRAM REVIEW SUMMARY

This overview of the City University of New York Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (CUNY ASAP) initiative is based on a program review conducted by Westat/Metis staff for the evaluation of the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) initiatives. The data were collected between December 2007 and April 2008 through interviews with staff of the CEO, meetings with the director of the CUNY ASAP program, and the assistant dean for Institutional Research and Assessment at CUNY (CUNY IR); site visits during March and early April of 2008 to the six participating community colleges; and monthly data reports provided to CEO by the CUNY ASAP program through May 2008. In addition, the Westat/Metis staff received and reviewed administrative and survey data provided by CUNY IR.[1]

Sponsoring Agency: The City University of New York

Provider Agency: City University of New York provides CUNY ASAP services through its six community colleges—Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), Bronx Community College (BCC), Hostos Community College (HCC), Kingsborough Community College (KCC), LaGuardia Community College (LCC), and Queensborough Community College (QCC).

Start Date: July 2007

CEO Budget: $6.5 million was provided for fiscal year 2008

Target Population: Low- and moderate-income community college students

Statement of Need: Approximately 350,000 individuals in New York City are working yet not earning enough to rise above the poverty level. A lack of skills and an inability to access education prevents many working poor from securing permanent well-paid jobs with growth potential. Low-income students are less likely to complete post-secondary education, placing them at greater risk of continued poverty.[2] At CUNY and other community colleges nationwide less than 21 percent of students complete associates degree programs within six years.

Goal and Services: The goal of CUNY ASAP is to help eligible students to complete associate's degrees in a relatively short period of time (e.g., 500 of the 1,000 or more participating students are expected to graduate within 3 years, and 750 are expected to graduate within 4 years of beginning the program)[3] and then to go on to find jobs with career potential or to transfer to a 4-year college for further academic training.

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[1] These data included responses to a CUNY ASAP-administered student survey; summaries of course grades, grade point averages (GPAs), and credit accumulation statistics for CUNY ASAP participants from the fall 2007 semester; fall-to-spring retention estimates for the current CUNY ASAP cohort; fall-to-spring retention rates and 3- and 4-year graduation rates for comparison students; and CUNY ASAP enrollment projections for fall 2008.

[2] Center for Economic Opportunity (December 2007). *Strategy and Implementation Report*, New York: Center for Economic Opportunity, p. 101.

[3] Data recently reported by the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (March 24, 2008) showed that among a same-size cohort (1,100) of similar students who entered CUNY in fall of 2004, only 291 graduated within 3 years. Similarly, among an analogous cohort in fall of 2003, only 368 graduated within 4 years.

Eligibility Criteria: Eligibility criteria for admission to CUNY ASAP include being New York City residents who have a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) high school equivalency certificate, have completed all remedial coursework (i.e., are "triple exempt"[4]) before beginning the program, and have previously acquired no more than 12 college credits.

Targets/Outcomes: The enrollment target for the CUNY ASAP initiative was initially at least 1,000 students. As shown below, budget guidelines provided by CUNY to the six campuses sought over-enrollment by 125 students. The actual fall 2007 cohort comprised 1,132 students, constituting an over-enrollment of 132 participants.

Table 1: Enrollment by Campus

Campus	Target Numbers from Budgets	Actual Numbers Enrolled	Percent of Budget Target Met
Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC)	200	249	125%
Bronx Community College (BCC)	150	118	79%
Hostos Community College (HCC)	100	82	82%
Kingsborough Community College (KCC)	250	247	99%
LaGuardia Community College (LCC)	225	208	92%
Queensborough Community College (QCC)	200	228	114%
TOTAL	**1,125**	**1,132**	**101%**

Source: CUNY Budget Documents and CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

Selected Key Findings

Fidelity to the Program Model. Data obtained during the site visits suggest that, overall, programmatic services are being delivered with a relatively high degree of intensity and fidelity. There were some campus-to-campus variations noted that were attributable to local issues such as staff availability, hiring procedures, enrollment capacity, and other challenges, but each programmatic component was in evidence at each campus, and staff appeared actively and enthusiastically engaged in service delivery. In other words, each campus appeared to be implementing the concepts of block scheduling, small class size, advisement, tutoring, and job placement/preparation with fidelity. Although we are satisfied that, to date, programmatic services are being delivered with a high degree of fidelity, there are clues that new challenges will emerge over time. For example, fidelity to block scheduling will be a significant challenge as students progress through the semesters and their academic paths diverge.

Characteristics of the Clients Served in Comparison to the Target Population. It is clear from the enrollment data that CUNY ASAP has successfully recruited and serves students who meet the eligibility criteria that have been set forth—i.e., NYC residents who are high school graduates (or GED completers), are "triple exempt," enter the program with 12 or fewer college credits, and can commit to attending college on a full-time basis. In addition, they have established a cohort for the program that exceeds the minimal target of 1,000 students by more than 13 percent. We note that, although the target population was to be low- and moderate-income, CUNY ASAP

[4] "Triple exempt" students have passed all parts of the CUNY Skills Assessment Test, or they are exempt from taking the test based on their NYS Regents, SAT, or ACT scores. Students interested in the program who were identified as needing only one area of remediation (i.e., "double exempt" students) attended a summer program in order to attain "triple exempt" status. Some students who did not qualify after the summer continued at the campus as non-ASAP students. Such students are referred to as "shadow students." Once "shadow students" attain "triple exempt" status they may be admitted to CUNY ASAP.

has not used poverty as a specific selection criterion.[5] As a result, it is possible that the CUNY ASAP cohort includes students who are not poor and, without more data, it is too early to say whether the CUNY ASAP program fully meets the CEO's mission to *reduce the number of people living in poverty in* NYC. This means that the findings from the CUNY ASAP initiative might not be generalizable beyond the participating population, which tends to be higher achieving, younger, and less likely to be working full-time than their campus peers.

Service Delivery. Students admitted to the program (as well as applicants who are still completing the entrance requirements) attend a summer orientation. Students are required to take at least 12 credits each semester. CUNY ASAP classes are intended to be small, with no more than 25 students in a class, and students are assigned by major to attend classes in blocks—that is, groups of CUNY ASAP students attend the same sets of classes together. Advisors meet with students on a regular basis to provide support and monitor student progress. Tutors are also available as needed to provide an academic boost outside of the classroom. Faculty members communicate with advisors frequently about individual student performance. Job developers help students prepare for and find employment as needed. Students receive financial support including assistance in applying for financial aid, free monthly transportation stipends (in the form of Metrocards), and free use of textbooks for their classes. In addition, students eligible for federal and/or state financial aid receive additional CUNY ASAP funding to pay for the balance of tuition and school fees.

Provider Capacity and Agency Management. CUNY Central takes an active role in managing CUNY ASAP at all six campus locations. The project director meets with the campus directors at least monthly to discuss their challenges and provide opportunities to interact with each other over a wide range of programmatic issues and concerns. The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (CUNY IR) maintains a wide range of administrative data regarding student demographics, credit accumulation, grades, and other key indicators. However, CUNY IR reports that it currently does not have sufficient staff resources to do much more than provide the basic CUNY ASAP data that it is required to collect and report to CEO.[6]

Early Outcomes. Data obtained thus far from CUNY IR indicate that, as shown below in Table 2, 1,029 (91%) of the initial cohort re-enrolled for courses in spring 2008.[7]

Table 2. Spring Retention of CUNY ASAP Students

Campus	Initial Cohort	Re-enrolled for Spring Semester	Percent Re-enrolled for Spring Semester
BMCC	249	229	92%
BCC	118	107	91%
HCC	82	69	84%
KCC	247	228	92%
LCC	208	184	89%
QCC	228	212	93%
TOTAL	**1,132**	**1,029**	**91%**

Source: CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (8/28/2008).

[5] Though poverty is not a selection criterion, CUNY personnel report that a sizable segment of the CUNY ASAP participants have low or moderate incomes and are eligible for and receive financial aid. Specifically, data obtained from CUNY IR (11/15/07) indicate that some financial aid is received by 72 percent of the participants at BMCC, 86 percent at BCC, 84 percent at HCC, 73 percent at KCC, 81 percent at LCC, and 69 percent at QCC. Further, full financial aid is indicated for 51 percent of the participants at BMCC, 45 percent at BCC, 65 percent at HCC, and 32 percent at QCC. No data have yet been received from CUNY IR regarding the proportion of students (if any) at LCC and KCC who are receiving full financial aid.

[6] CUNY IR was able to conduct a student survey in the fall semester that gathered data on student demographics, perceptions about the initiative, use of the CUNY ASAP offerings, and other information. CUNY IR initially provided data to the Westat/Metis team without respondent frequency counts for individual survey items. Subsequently, Westat/Metis requested and received additional data showing item response frequencies. The Westat/Metis team is currently analyzing these data.

[7] Preliminary data provided by CUNY (9/4/2008) indicate a fall-to-fall re-enrollment rate of 81 percent.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Early findings indicate that:

- CUNY ASAP appears to have good program infrastructure, management, and agency oversight in place, and services are being implemented with enthusiasm, commitment, and a high degree of fidelity.
- Recruitment targets have been exceeded.
- Participating students meet the eligibility criteria that have been set forth.
- Sufficient progress has been made to date to suggest that it is plausible that the initiative will meet its outcome objectives with the current cohort of participants.
- To the extent that students who are not poor are being served by CUNY ASAP, the initiative may be out of full alignment with the CEO's mission.
- Specific and measurable outcomes have been articulated, and data systems are in place to capture the required information.
- CUNY has a strong interest in contributing to the base of knowledge about improving community colleges and student outcomes and, through its Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, is an active and supportive participant in the evaluation.

The Westat/Metis team recommends the following:

- During the initial academic year, each campus organizes its instructional schedules to allow CUNY ASAP students to participate in block programming. However, as students take more classes in their majors and other variations in the cohort occur (e.g., failed classes, course withdrawals, etc.), it will become increasingly more difficult to sustain block programming. We recommend that CUNY consider alternative arrangements to block scheduling that would continue to satisfy the students' needs for a high degree of interaction with their fellow students and with their instructors.
- In an effort to evaluate the impact of CUNY ASAP on participating students, CUNY IR constructed a comparison group from the fall of 2006 using only three match criteria—"triple exempt" status, full-time enrollment, and registration in the same majors as students enrolled in CUNY ASAP. We recommend that CUNY consider expanding the match criteria for subsequent comparisons, in order to better discern the relative impact of the CUNY ASAP experience on participating students.
- As a group, the current CUNY ASAP cohort may not be representative of the general CUNY community college population. If future cohorts are enrolled in the program, we recommend that consideration be given to enrolling groups that better represent the overall population. In this way, the results of the intervention would be more generalizable.

CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (CUNY ASAP)
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PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

1. Introduction

The Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) has funded approximately 40 initiatives across some 20 sponsoring agencies aimed at reducing the number of working poor, young adults, and children living in poverty in New York City. CEO is committed to evaluating its programs and policies and is developing a specific evaluation plan for each of its initiatives. For example, several major new initiatives will implement random assignment evaluations or other rigorous designs. Some programs are slated to receive implementation and outcome evaluations, while others may be evaluated using readily available administrative data. This differentiated approach reflects the varied scale of the CEO interventions, data and evaluation opportunities, and finite program and evaluation resources. Westat and Metis Associates are evaluating many of these programs on behalf of CEO. The purposes of the evaluations are to collect and report data on the implementation, progress, and outcomes of the programs in the CEO initiative to inform policy and program decision-making within CEO and the agencies that sponsor the programs.

The first phase of the Westat/Metis evaluation is to conduct a systematic review of selected CEO programs. The program reviews involve Westat/Metis staff reviewing program documents, obtaining available implementation and outcome data, interviewing program administrators, and, where appropriate, going on-site to observe program activities and interview direct service staff and participants. The results are used to assess the program design and implementation, develop a logic model to represent the underlying theory of each program, determine the extent to which the program meets key CEO criteria, examine the measurement and information systems for the program, and provide options for next steps.

The Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), is one of the three initiatives sponsored by of the City University of New York (CUNY). CUNY ASAP was designed to address the problem that an inability to persist through and succeed at post-secondary education prevents many working poor from fully achieving their growth potential. Beginning in the summer of 2007, CUNY ASAP provides a range of supports to an entering cohort of 1,132 students seeking to attain an associate's degree within 3 or 4 years.

Information and data for this Program Review Report are based on interviews conducted by Westat/Metis staff between December 2007 and April 2008 with relevant staff of the CEO, meetings with the Director of the CUNY ASAP program and the Assistant Dean for Institutional Research and Assessment at CUNY (CUNY IR), site visits during March and early April of 2008 to the six participating community colleges, and monthly data reports provided to CEO by the CUNY ASAP program through May 2008. In addition, the Westat/Metis staff received and reviewed various summary data provided by CUNY IR. These data included responses to a CUNY ASAP-administered student survey; summaries of course grades, grade point averages (GPAs), and credit accumulation statistics for CUNY ASAP participants from the fall 2007 semester; fall-to-spring retention estimates for the current CUNY ASAP cohort; fall-to-spring retention rates and 3- and 4-

year graduation rates for comparison students; and CUNY ASAP enrollment projections for fall 2008.

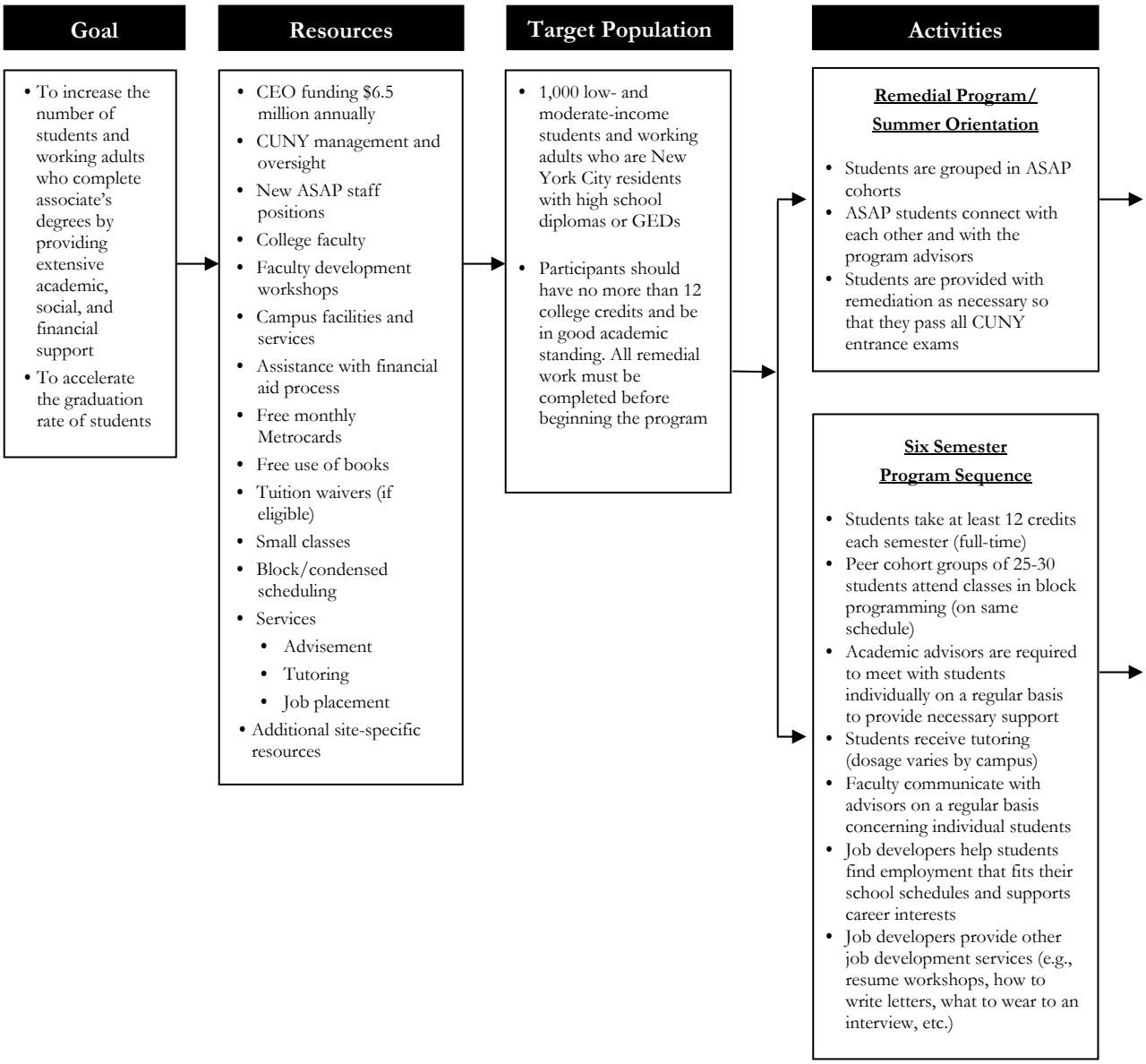
A key analytic tool in the program review is development of a logic model that serves as a visual representation of the underlying logic or theory of a program. The program logic model details the program's context, assumptions, and resources and their relationships to one another. By examining the program's internal logic and external context, the evaluation team and reader are able to determine if the program design is consistent with overall goals and capable of achieving its intended outcomes. Toward this end, this Program Review Report focuses on early outcomes and the challenges faced in achieving them.

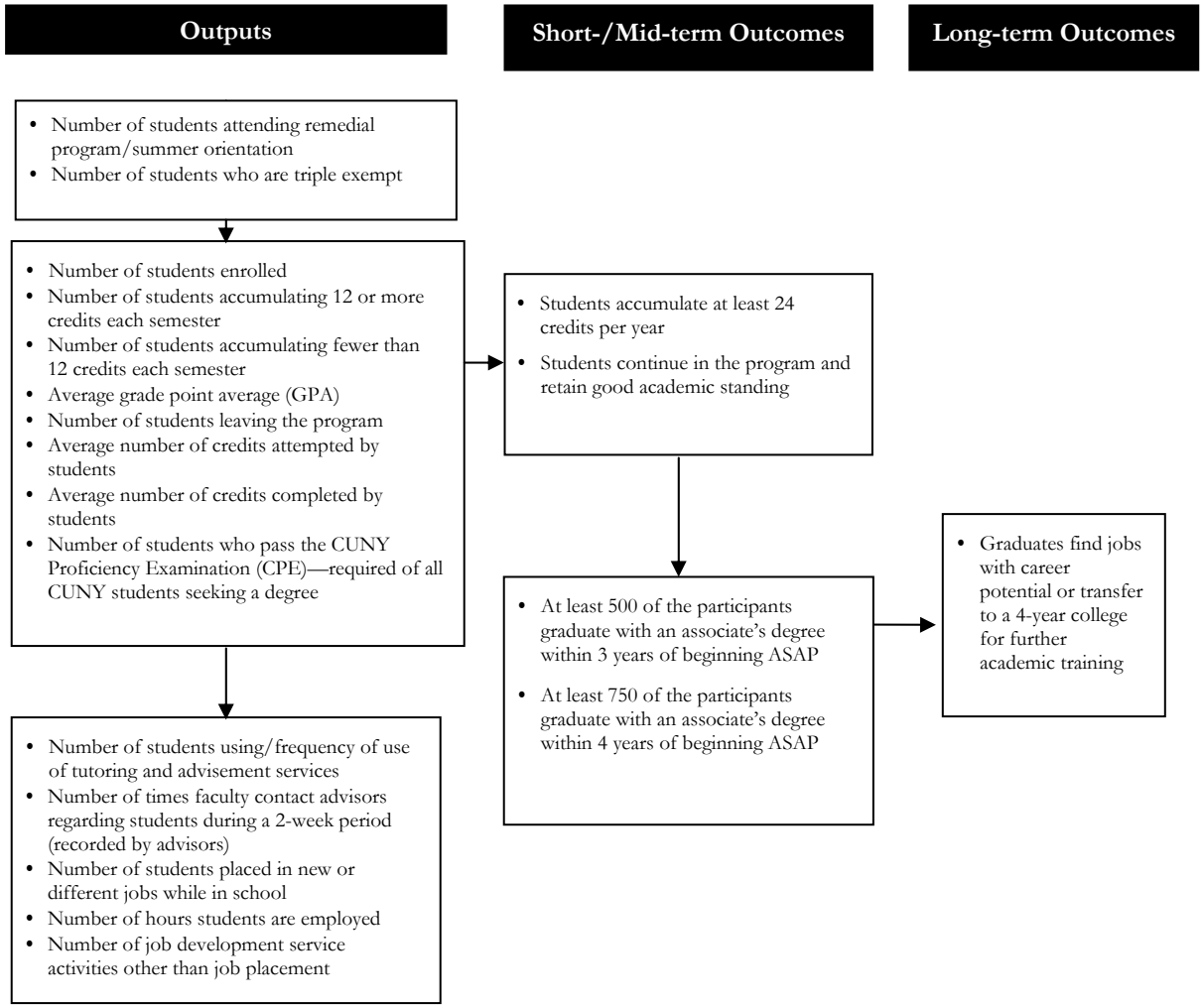
2. Overview and Assessment of the Program

Program Goal. The goal of CUNY ASAP is to help eligible students complete associate's degrees in a relatively short period of time (e.g., 500 of the 1,000 or more participating students are expected to graduate within 3 years of beginning the program, and 750 are expected to graduate within 4 years), and go on to find jobs with career potential or to transfer to a 4-year college for further academic training.

The CUNY ASAP model is displayed in a logic model—or theory of action—format on the following two pages. The logic model includes the program's context, assumptions, and resources. Each activity is linked to the number of individuals targeted to participate in the different activities (outputs), as well as short- and long-term participant outcomes.

The City University of New York Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (CUNY ASAP) Logic Model





Context

- Approximately 350,000 individuals in New York City are working, yet not earning enough to rise above poverty.
- In 2005, those with an associate's degree earned on average $8,542 more per year than those with a high school diploma.
- Low-income students are less likely to complete a post-secondary education, placing them at greater risk of continued poverty.
- In New York City, only 21% of students enrolled in a community college receive an associate's degree within 6 years.
- Approximately 25% of similar students graduate within 3 years, while 35% graduate within 4 years. Similar students are based on cohorts of students entering in the fall of 2004 (3-year cohort) and the fall of 2003 (4-year cohort) who were reading-, writing-, and math-proficient, full-time, first-time freshman entering associate's degree programs at CUNY community colleges in the same majors offered to CUNY ASAP students.

Fidelity to the Program Model. CUNY ASAP was developed as a holistic response to the many challenges confronting low-/moderate-income individuals as they pursue their educational goals. CUNY ASAP was designed to serve low-/moderate-income community college students. Eligibility criteria established for the participants included New York City residency, a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) high school equivalency certificate, completion of all remedial coursework (i.e., "triple exempt" status)[1] before beginning the program, and no more than 12 previously acquired college credits. Although poverty is not a selection criterion, CUNY personnel report that a sizable segment of CUNY ASAP participants have low or moderate incomes and are eligible for and receive financial aid.[2]

The CUNY ASAP service model incorporates a number of key elements that are recognized in research literature as important approaches for helping community college students to persist through school – e.g., block scheduling, close academic and personal advisement, tutoring, job development, career counseling, and several financial incentives. Notably, many of the concepts embedded in CUNY ASAP were drawn from the Opening Doors program—a rigorously evaluated national demonstration project.[3] The Opening Doors program looks specifically at the impact of block scheduling (i.e., developing learning communities[4] within a college) and other supports that are designed to help community college students succeed. In the Opening Doors program, learning communities last for only one semester, whereas the CUNY ASAP design calls for learning communities and other supports to persist throughout the entire associate's degree program.

Although the Westat/Metis team generally found that the CUNY ASAP model is being delivered with a high degree of fidelity, respondents in our interviews noted a number of challenges and potential threats to fidelity going forward.

- **Block scheduling.** During the initial academic year, each campus organized instructional schedules so as to allow CUNY ASAP students to participate in block scheduling. However, as students take more classes in their majors and other variations in the cohort occur (e.g., failed classes, course withdrawals, etc.), it will become increasingly difficult to sustain block scheduling.

- **Restricted majors.** Although not explicitly stated as a requirement of the CUNY ASAP model, one would expect that participating students would be able to choose from the same range of subjects and majors as the general population of community college students. However, when the program was developed, specific majors were selected for the CUNY

[1] "Triple exempt" students are "remedial-free," i.e., they have passed all parts of the CUNY Skills Assessment Test, or they are exempt from taking the test based on their NYS Regents, SAT, or ACT scores. Students interested in the program who were identified as needing only one area of remediation (i.e., "double exempt" students) attended a summer program in order to attain "triple exempt" status. Some students who did not qualify after the summer continued at the campus as non-ASAP students. Such students are referred to as "shadow students." Once "shadow students" attain "triple exempt" status they may be admitted to ASAP.

[2] Data obtained from CUNY IR (11/15/07) indicate that some financial aid is received by 72 percent of the participants at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), 86 percent at Bronx Community College (BCC), 84 percent at Hostos Community College (HCC), 73 percent at Kingsborough Community College (KCC), 81 percent at LaGuardia Community College (LCC), and 69 percent at Queens Community College (QCC). Further, full financial aid is indicated for 51 percent of the participants at BMCC, 45 percent at BCC, 65 percent at HCC, and 32 percent at QCC.

[3] Kingsborough and Queensborough Community Colleges are two of six sites in this project.

[4] In the Opening Doors model, entering freshmen are placed into groups of up to 25 students who take courses together, have joint assignments, meet regularly with each other, and receive counseling and tutoring services as needed. These groups are referred to as "learning communities."

ASAP students at each campus. This was required in order to establish block scheduling and includes popular majors such as liberal arts and business. Some staff members identified this limited set of majors as a challenge to the program. For example, during CUNY ASAP recruitment the colleges could not include students who were interested in majors outside of the selected ones, and they were not able to allow students to change their majors if they developed an interest in one that was not offered for the program.

- **Sustaining interest and progress through the summer.** The research literature suggests that attending summer classes (either to accelerate credit accumulation or to make up for poor grades achieved in previous semesters) is positively associated with school retention and completion.[5,6] However, we know from our site visits that different campuses offer differing opportunities and incentives for CUNY ASAP students to attend summer courses. For example, some campuses are on a four-semester year and are able to provide the CUNY ASAP offerings throughout the year, while other campuses are on a two-semester schedule and cannot offer CUNY ASAP's supplementary services to cohort students who attend their summer sessions. This unevenness with regard to summer school opportunities poses an additional threat to fidelity and is likely to have an impact on outcomes.

Target Population and Clients Served. The enrollment target for the CUNY ASAP initiative was initially fixed at a minimum of 1,000 students. As shown in Table 1, budget guidelines provided by CUNY to the six campuses sought over-enrollment by 125 students. The actual fall 2007 cohort reached 1,132 students, constituting an over-enrollment of 132 participants. It can be seen in Table 1 that there was some variability between campuses. For example, BCC was furthest from achieving its budget target (118 enrolled versus a budget target of 150, 79%), while BMCC exceeded its budget target by 25 percent (249 enrolled versus a budget target of 200). While we do not yet have an explanation for this variability, we suspect that it is largely due to the relative availability of "triple-exempt" candidates.

Table 1. CUNY ASAP's Targets and Participants

Campus	Target Numbers from Budgets	Actual Numbers Enrolled	Percent of Budget Target Met
Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC)	200	249	125%
Bronx Community College (BCC)	150	118	79%
Hostos Community College (HCC)	100	82	82%
Kingsborough Community College (KCC)	250	247	99%
LaGuardia Community College (LCC)	225	208	92%
Queensborough Community College (QCC)	200	228	114%
TOTAL	**1,125**	**1,132**	**101%**

Source: CUNY budget documents.

[5] According to the CUNY ASAP director, 67 percent of the participating students were enrolled in summer school as of 5/22/08.

[6] Beer, G. Blanc, M.L., & Miller, M. J. (2008). Summer learning camps: Helping students to prepare for college. College Student Journal, 42(3), 930-938.

Gilmer, T.C. (2007) AN understanding of the improved grades, retention and graduation rates of STEM majors at the academic investment in math and science (AIMS) program of Bowling Green State University (BGSU). Journal of STEM Education & Research, 8(1/2), 11-21.

Walpole, M., Simmerman, H., Mack, C., Mills, J. T., Scales, M., & Albano, D. (2008). Bridge to success: Insight into Summer Bridge Program students' college transition. Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, 20(1), 11-29.

Outreach and Recruitment. Students were recruited prior to the summer of 2007. Recruitment and outreach methods varied somewhat by site and included open houses (held during weekdays, evenings, and weekends), mailing brochures to public high school seniors living in the zip codes of CEO target neighborhoods, presentations at the high schools in the target neighborhoods, communications through the CUNY website, brochures and fliers, and the distribution of materials to other city agencies, e.g., the Department of Education, Department of Small Business Services, and the Department of Youth and Community Development. Probably the most significant recruitment source was CUNY's active file of applicants for the fall 2007 semester. Applicants who appeared to meet, or were close to meeting, the eligibility requirements for CUNY ASAP were recruited for enrollment. CUNY IR provided a profile of some of the demographic characteristics of the CUNY ASAP cohort. Selected demographic data are summarized for the total cohort and for each campus in Table 2.

Table 2. Profile of CUNY ASAP Students: Fall 2007

Characteristic	Percentage Overall (N=1,132)	Percentage by Campus					
		BMCC	BCC	HCC	KCC	LCC	QCC
		249	118	82	247	208	228
Gender							
Male	45.6%	36.1%	50.8%	32.9%	48.6%	48.1%	52.2%
Female	54.4%	63.9%	49.2%	67.1%	51.4%	51.9%	47.8%
Race/Ethnicity							
American Indian/Native Alaskan	0.2%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	10.2%	4.4%	5.1%	2.4%	10.5%	15.4%	17.1%
Black	31.5%	45.4%	44.1%	30.5%	30.8%	27.9%	14.5%
Hispanic	37.2%	39.8%	48.3%	65.9%	15.8%	47.6%	32.0%
White	20.8%	10.0%	2.5%	1.2%	42.9%	9.1%	36.0%
Age Group							
18 or younger	58.7%	53.4%	45.8%	25.6%	76.9%	46.2%	75.0%
19 or 20	21.8%	24.9%	25.4%	36.6%	14.6%	24.5%	16.7%
21 to 23	8.4%	8.4%	11.0%	18.3%	4.0%	10.6%	6.1%
24 or older	11.0%	13.3%	17.8%	19.5%	4.5%	18.8%	2.2%
Median Age	18	18	19	20	18	19	18
Mean Age	20	20	22	21	19	22	18

Source: CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

As shown in Table 2, there exist wide campus-by-campus variations in the demographic characteristics of the CUNY ASAP cohort. For example:

- Proportionately fewer males attend HCC (32.9%) and BMCC (36.1%) than attend the other campuses.
- KCC and QCC serve proportionately more white (nonminority) cohort students (42.9% and 36%, respectively) than the other campuses, with HCC serving only 1.2 percent nonminority CUNY ASAP students.

- Compared with the other campuses, cohort students at HCC have the highest median age (20), while the highest mean age occurs at the Bronx and LaGuardia campuses (22 years of age).
- The data suggest that the campuses with more white students (i.e., KCC and QCC) also appear to have the youngest students.

Additional findings show potentially important variability between the campuses, according to the responses to the CUNY ASAP-administered student survey.[7] Among other items, the survey asked students to indicate whether they had been enrolled in college prior to CUNY ASAP, what was the highest level of education they planned to attain within the next 10 years, and how important various program services were to students' decisions to join the CUNY ASAP program. These data are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3. CUNY ASAP Student Survey Results

Selected Survey Items	Cross-Campus Totals	Percentage by Campus					
		BMCC	BCC	HCC	KCC	LCC	QCC
Percentage enrolled in college prior to CUNY ASAP	24.2%	25.5%	34.2%	45.7%	19.4%	20.0%	15.6%
What is the highest level of education you plan to attain in the next 10 years?							
2-year degree	3.9%	2.8%	10.5%	1.5%	4.8%	4.1%	1.5%
4-year degree	35.4%	31.8%	26.3%	44.1%	36.8%	31.7%	42.1%
Graduate/professional degree	60.7%	65.4%	63.2%	54.4%	58.4%	64.2%	56.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100.0%
Percentage of respondents indicating that a particular service was "very important" to their decision to join CUNY ASAP							
Tuition waiver	76.1%	82.5%	60.8%	84.3%	76.3%	83.7%	65.3%
Small classes	58.2%	65.6%	67.1%	68.8%	53.1%	55.4%	48.3%
Personalized advisement	67.6%	73.3%	55.7%	70.4%	74.5%	66.2%	56.2%
Block programming	37.9%	37.4%	44.3%	45.7%	42.6%	35.7%	26.6%
Job placement	41.5%	50.3%	41.0%	43.7%	41.1%	37.2%	33.1%
Metrocards (subsidized transportation)	87.5%	91.8%	87.3%	88.6%	84.8%	90.8%	82.3%
Free books	95.6%	96.4%	94.9%	98.6%	94.3%	96.2%	94.6%

Source: CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

Table 3 shows that:

- There was wide variability among the campuses regarding prior college enrollment, ranging from 15.6 percent at QCC to almost 50 percent (45.7%) at HCC.
- Educational plans for the next 10-year period also varied somewhat across the campuses, with 10.5 percent of the respondents at BCC versus only 1.5 percent of the respondents at HCC indicating that they plan to stop after attaining their 2-year degrees.

[7] CUNY IR developed and administered a CUNY ASAP student survey during the fall semester. Data from the survey were made available to Westat/Metis on February 14, 2008. CUNY IR reports an overall response rate of 74.1 percent, ranging from 62.5 percent at LCC to 86.6 percent at HCC. The survey captured a variety of information regarding student demographics, perceptions about the various components of the initiative, extent of use of the ASAP offerings, and other data.

- When assessing how important each of several program offerings were regarding decisions to join CUNY ASAP, financial incentives (i.e., free books, subsidized travel and tuition waivers) were reported by the greatest plurality of respondents as being "very important." By contrast, fewer respondents reported that such program services as small classes, personalized advisement, block programming and job placement were "very important." In fact, across the campuses, only 37.9 percent of the respondents rated block programming as "very important" to their decision to enroll.

CUNY IR initially provided survey data to the Westat/Metis team without respondent frequency counts for the individual survey items. Since these frequencies are needed for a more complete analysis of the survey results, Westat/Metis requested and has received from CUNY IR this additional information. The Westat/Metis team is currently analyzing these data.

Program Services

Students admitted to the program (as well as applicants who were still completing the entrance requirements) attended a summer orientation before the fall semester began. Students are required to take at least 12 credits each semester. CUNY ASAP classes are intended to be small, with no more than 25 students in a class, and students are assigned to attend classes in blocks by major—i.e., groups of CUNY ASAP students attend the same sets of classes together. Advisors meet with students on a regular basis to provide support and to monitor the student's progress. Tutors are also available as needed to provide an academic boost outside of the classroom. Faculty members communicate with advisors frequently about individual student performance. Job developers help students prepare for, and find employment as needed. Students receive financial support, including assistance in applying for financial aid, free monthly transportation stipends (in the form of Metrocards), and the free use of textbooks for their classes. In addition, students eligible for federal and/or state financial aid receive additional CUNY ASAP funding to pay for the balance of tuition and school fees.

Although the Westat/Metis team generally found that the program services are being implemented as anticipated, a number of challenges were noted during the site visits.

- **Staffing.** Some campuses were not fully staffed at the start of the program. As a result, there was a delay in bringing the program to full functionality. Furthermore, at some sites, there was turnover of staff through the academic year. It should be noted that the program's design depends heavily on students forming trusting bonds with academic advisors. Although delays or changes in the staffing may negatively affect the strength of these bonds, at the time of the evaluators' visits, staffing appeared to have stabilized, and the programs were fully functioning.
- **Hyper bonding.** Program staff in all locations identified a phenomenon that has been termed "hyper bonding." Because students spend a considerable amount of time with each other during the summer orientation and subsequently through the block programming, they become extremely "tight knit" as a group. This phenomenon appears to have both positive and negative repercussions. On one hand, students work closely together and support each other in their classes and on their course work. On the other hand, there have been behavioral problems in some classes associated with hyper bonding, such as acting out and inattention, and some of the professors have reported difficulties in maintaining order.

- **Distribution of books.** The distribution of books to students at the beginning of each semester and the collection of books at the end of each semester has been problematic for the campuses. Some students did not receive their books in a timely manner, and considerable inefficiencies were reported as students attempted to return books between semesters.
- **Diverse needs.** Like students in the general community college population, CUNY ASAP participants enter college with a range of issues that can hinder successfully completing their degree. For example, some students face family problems, legal issues, immigration difficulties, pregnancies, economic issues, and other such challenges. Through the advisement process, CUNY ASAP expects to make it more likely that students will be able to deal with these issues and complete their degrees. In fact, a key feature of CUNY ASAP is the availability of advisors who will develop and maintain individual relationships with the students that will be maintained over the years of the CUNY ASAP intervention. Although CUNY ASAP advisory personnel appear well equipped to provide academic advisement as well as some amount of counseling regarding students' personal issues, they are often challenged by the need to recognize their own limitations and to find adequate and available alternative resources for referrals necessitated when students' problems exceed the advisors' capacities to help.

Outputs and Outcomes

Thus far, data obtained from the CUNY IR indicate that, as shown in Table 4, 1,029 (91%) of the initial cohort re-enrolled for courses in spring 2008.[8]

Table 4. Re-Enrollment in the Spring Semester

Campus	Initial Cohort	Re-enrolled for Spring Semester	Percent Re-enrolled for Spring Semester
BMCC	249	229	92%
BCC	118	107	91%
HCC	82	69	84%
KCC	247	228	92%
LCC	208	184	89%
QCC	228	212	93%
TOTAL	**1,132**	**1,029**	**91%**

Source: CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (8/28/2008).

Typically, less than 21 percent of CUNY community college students receive an associate's degree in 6 years, similar to the national average.[9] CEO asked CUNY to develop a comparison group to compare and contrast the achievements of the CUNY ASAP participants to those of similarly situated nonparticipants. CUNY IR constructed comparison groups from previous school years consisting of full-time "triple exempt" students enrolled in the same majors as the current cohort of

[8] Preliminary data provided by CUNY (9/4/2008) indicate a fall-to-fall re-enrollment rate of 81 percent.

[9] CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (March 2007). *System Retention and Graduation Rates of Full-time, First-time Freshmen in Associate Programs by Year of Entry: Total University*. New York: Author.

CUNY ASAP students.[10] From its analyses, CUNY IR provided the Westat/Metis team with data regarding the fall-to-spring re-enrollment rates for comparison-group students who entered CUNY community colleges during fall of 2006.[11] The CUNY IR data show a fall-to-spring re-enrollment rate of 87 percent for this comparison group—4 percentage points lower than the 91 percent re-enrollment rate reported in Table 4 for the CUNY ASAP cohort. Further, according to data recently reported by CUNY IR (March 24, 2008), among similar students from a cohort of comparable size who entered CUNY in fall of 2004, only 291 (25.4%) graduated within 3 years. Similarly, of students entering an analogous cohort in fall of 2003, only 368 (34.6%) graduated within 4 years.

In addition to the retention data described above, CUNY IR provided comparative data regarding credit accumulation and course grades for the comparison group of non-ASAP students who entered CUNY during fall of 2006. Table 5 summarizes these data.

Table 5. Initial Fall Semester Performance: CUNY ASAP versus Comparison Group

Group	Total Students	Mean Credits Attempted	Mean Credits Earned	Semester GPA
Fall 2007 CUNY ASAP Students	1,132	13.9	12.3	2.56
Fall 2006 Comparison Group*	1,382	12.0	10.0	2.42

*Triple-exempt, full-time first-time freshmen entering into majors offered to CUNY ASAP students in fall of 2007. These comparison group data are as of March 2008. It is our understanding that CUNY IR will be providing data for additional comparison groups in future reports.
Source: CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (8/28/2008).

It can be seen in Table 5 that, on average, CUNY ASAP students both attempted and earned more credits and had a slightly higher grade point average than the comparison group.[12]

Provider Capacity and Agency Management. Importantly, CUNY Central takes an active role in managing CUNY ASAP at all six campus locations. In fact, there is a high level of support for the program from the Chancellor of CUNY, and from senior administrators at each campus. Further, the project director meets with the campus directors at least monthly to discuss their challenges and provide opportunities to interact with each other over a wide range of programmatic issues and concerns.

CUNY ASAP campus staffing generally includes:

- A full-time director who is responsible for the overall administration and supervision of the program on site;
- Student advisors who guide participants in their academic pursuits and assist them with life issues (note that CUNY ASAP intends to sustain the individual student-advisor relationships formed during the 07-08 academic year throughout the students' entire program of study);
- Tutors who provide supplementary academic support;

[10] We believe that the comparison may be limited because the groups have not been matched across other key criteria, such as demographic characteristics or proportional representation in major fields of study. We have recommended to CUNY that it consider expanding the match criteria for subsequent comparisons.

[11] Comparison group data in this report are as of 8/12/2008. It is our understanding that CUNY IR will be providing data for additional comparison groups in future reports.

[12] We suggest that these findings be interpreted with caution because of the potential limitations of this comparison group.

- Job developers who assist students with job readiness skills and assist students in job searches as needed; and
- Each campus reports having administrative support available for the collection and reporting of participant data.

Based on initial site visits and interviews, it appears as though the CUNY ASAP staff members have appropriate backgrounds and prior experiences for their current jobs. They were observed to be energetic, enthusiastic, and deeply committed to the program's overall goals, as well as to the individual students. Given the presence of mental health or legal issues among some of the students, it was suggested by CUNY ASAP program staff that consideration be given to the assignment of additional trained social workers to the program.

Finally, CUNY IR maintains a wide range of administrative data regarding student demographics, credit accumulation, grades, and other key indicators. However, CUNY IR reports that it currently does not have sufficient staff resources to do much more than provide the basic CUNY ASAP data that it is required to collect and report to CEO. (An exception to this is the above-described student survey.)

Conclusions. Early evaluation findings indicate that:

- CUNY ASAP appears to have a good program infrastructure, management, and agency oversight in place, and services are being implemented with enthusiasm, commitment, and a high degree of fidelity.
- Recruitment targets have been exceeded.
- Participating students meet the eligibility criteria that have been set forth.
- Sufficient progress has been made to date to suggest that it is plausible that the initiative will meet its outcome objectives with the current cohort of participants.
- To the extent that certain students who are not poor are being served by CUNY ASAP, the initiative may be out of full alignment with the CEO mission.[13]
- Specific and measurable outcomes have been articulated, and data systems are in place to capture the required information.
- CUNY has a strong interest in contributing to the base of knowledge about successful community college programs and, through its Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, is an active and supportive participant in the evaluation.

3. Programmatic Recommendations:

During the initial academic year, each campus organized instructional schedules to allow CUNY ASAP students to participate in block scheduling. However, as students take more classes in their majors and other variations in the cohort occur (e.g., failed classes, course withdrawals, etc.), it will become more difficult to sustain block scheduling. We recommend that CUNY consider alternative arrangements to block scheduling that would still satisfy the students' needs for a high degree of interaction with their fellow students and with their instructors.

[13] It is our understanding that CUNY IR is currently working to provide data to address this issue.

As described earlier, CUNY ASAP advisory personnel may not always be fully equipped to deal with the range of issues that are presented by participating students, and it may not always be feasible to locate alternative resources when this occurs. We therefore recommend that consideration be given to the assignment of additional trained social workers to the program.[14]

Given staff members' concerns that the limited set of majors available to CUNY ASAP students might be having a negative impact on recruitment for and retention in the program, we recommend that consideration be given to expanding the course offerings and/or majors available to CUNY ASAP students as they advance in their studies.

As noted earlier, the unevenness that exists across the campuses regarding summer school opportunities poses a threat to the fidelity of CUNY ASAP, and is likely to have an impact on outcomes. It is therefore recommended that equivalent summer school offerings and benefits be extended to all CUNY ASAP students.

As a group, the current CUNY ASAP cohort may not be representative of the general CUNY community college population. For example, it is likely that they are higher achieving, younger, and less likely to be working full-time than their campus peers. If future cohorts are enrolled in the program, we recommend that consideration be given to enrolling groups that better represent the overall population. In this way, the results of the intervention would be more generalizable.

[14] CUNY ASAP reports that it is placing three Hunter College School of Social Work graduate interns at colleges that expressed the greatest need for additional support. The interns will work 21 hours per week at Hostos, Bronx Community and La Guardia and be supervised by a licensed social work faculty member from Hunter beginning 9/15/08.