The City University of New York

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The City University of New York
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“Evaluating the Impact of College Remediation at Community Colleges and Other Postsecondary Institutions”
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Good morning, Chairperson Rodriguez and members of the Higher Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the important issue of remediation in our community colleges. The focus of my remarks is what the University is doing to prepare students before they start their college degree programs so that they do not need, or need significantly less, remediation. Much of this work is done in close partnership with the New York City Department of Education, which has adopted college readiness for its high school graduates as a top priority. At the same time, we also offer a number of programs separate from the DOE that prepare students for college-level academic work. I will speak about both.

CUNY and the DOE work together through the Graduate NYC! College Readiness and Success initiative, which receives support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. As part of Graduate NYC!, both systems have committed to significantly increasing graduation rates and to supporting the high school-to-college transition so that many more public high school graduates are prepared to succeed in college. We are working to better align high school graduation and college entrance requirements, and to educate the public about what it takes to be ready for and succeed in college, and we have engaged in an historic data-sharing agreement that allows both systems to track students’ educational progress. The ultimate goals of this initiative are to greatly increase the proportion of New York City high school students who graduate prepared for college and who then enroll in college, and to double the numbers of students graduating from CUNY by 2020.

Within this context, we offer several different programs that share the goal of ensuring that students come to CUNY better prepared and needing less remediation. College Now is our largest, serving over 20,000 students in 350 high schools each year. The majority of them take college credit courses at virtually all of the CUNY colleges. Many of these students enroll at CUNY after
high school graduation; research has shown that they earn more credits than their peers and are less likely to leave college.

At Home in College, a relatively new program funded by the Robin Hood Foundation, works with high school seniors from 62 partner schools whose high school grades and performance on standardized tests indicate they will likely need remediation in college. Specially designed math and English courses prepare them to take and pass the CUNY Placement Exams. Participants stay in the program through their first year of college, and get help with college applications and enrollment, filing for financial aid, college visits, and learning about college majors and careers. Results to date have been strong, with program participants testing better on our placement exams and needing significantly less remediation when they start college.

CUNY also administers 12 Early College High Schools, in which students may earn one to two years of college credit, in addition to a high school diploma. The newest of these schools is the Pathways in Technology Early College high school, known as “P-Tech,” which is a partnership between IBM, the DOE, New York City College of Technology, and the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs. The high expectations that are fundamental to early college schools have a major impact on outcomes for their largely low-income and minority students. For example, 40% of the first graduating class this past spring at Hostos Lincoln Academy earned both a high school diploma and an associate degree from Hostos Community College. An additional 38% graduated having earned between 12 and 60 college credits.

Our work with the DOE to support college readiness and the transition to college for New York City public school students is clearly important to the University. If that work is successful, and we believe it will be, the number of students graduating from high school in need of remediation will go down.
In addition to those high school graduates who need remediation, there are other groups of students who come to CUNY unprepared for college-level academic work. They include those who have been away from school for many years, those who left high school and instead earned a GED, and students who need to improve their English language skills before starting college coursework.

You may be aware of CUNY’s extensive adult education programs, which include English as a Second Language, pre-GED and GED preparation. One of those programs, called CUNY Prep, is supported by the Mayor’s Office Center for Economic Opportunity and offers a full-time college preparatory educational program to young adults who have left high school and need to earn a GED. Located in the Bronx, CUNY Prep was one of the first programs anywhere to focus on helping disconnected youth transition to college after earning a GED and has become a national model since its founding in 2003. It has helped over 1400 young people earn GEDs, about forty percent of whom have gone on to college.

The CUNY Language Immersion Program works with a different population, that of immigrants whose academic skills may be college-ready, but whose English language skills need improvement before they take college-level coursework. Students who have been admitted to CUNY defer their matriculation in order to enroll in this full-time program for one or two semesters, during which they pay only $75 per semester in fees and therefore preserve their financial aid for credit-bearing coursework. The program serves over 3,000 students per year.

Our newest program, CUNY Start, is modeled on the Language Immersion Program, and also works intensively with students who have been admitted to CUNY but who are not yet ready for college-level academic work. It was initially developed to address the fact that students who came to CUNY having earned a GED often struggled with required remedial coursework and rarely earned a degree. Students who test as needing significant remediation enroll in a full-time
program focused on college-preparatory reading and writing, math, and “college success,” or a part-time program focused on either reading and writing, or math. Initial outcomes have been excellent. In the two years since the program began, two-thirds of students in the full-time program have tested out of remediation entirely. The other third have started their college degree programs needing significantly less remediation. Based on this early success, CUNY has greatly expanded the program, from four to seven colleges, and more than doubled its enrollment to 700 this semester.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak about our work helping students to prepare for college and lessening their need for remediation once they start. Our efforts in this regard are essential to the University’s mission of providing a quality higher education for all New Yorkers and ensuring both access and success. We are proud of these programs, and greatly appreciate the support of the Council in helping us to carry out this mission.

Individual CUNY colleges, particularly the community colleges, are also focused on addressing remediation issues. You will hear more about that from our next speaker, Dr. Carole Joseph, President of Bronx Community College.