How to Finish Your Associates Degree ASAP

By Nazia Mumtahana

It is never an easy transition to enroll in college. You are nervous and don’t know what to expect from this new chapter in your life. What classes will you be taking, will you make any friends? Books are expensive. Is the major you picked right for you? All these thoughts running through your head and you don’t know what to make of them.

“I was excited but I felt lost,” said Amanda Martell, an 18 year old Queensborough Community College student. “I didn’t even know who my advisor was when I first started as a freshman. I just wanted to take the right classes and get college over with as soon as possible.”

The CUNY program called Accelerated Studies in Associates Program, or ASAP, provides one-on-one advisement, intensive tutoring, tuition waivers, vouchers for textbooks and monthly MetroCards. The program invests in students to remove financial barriers and helps them commit to full time study.

“I have made it through my first two years at college because of ASAP,” said Carolina Mota, a 22-year old recent graduate from Bronx Community College. “I knew I was in safe hands,” Martell said. “My entire graduation plan was already set out for me, which made college less stressful.”

As students approach graduation, there are also plenty of workshops to help them transition into their workforce or transfer to a four-year senior college best suited for their majors. According to the CUNY’S central office, “ASAP students graduate at more than double the rates of non-ASAP students. To date, across five cohorts, ASAP has an average graduation rate of 52 percent versus 22 percent.”

What makes this program unique amongst other programs is that it also provides guidance to undocumented students.

“College isn’t in everyone’s budget, especially when you aren’t getting any kind of federal help” said Mota. “My family and I are from the Dominican Republic and I am the first in my family to attend college. It felt like living a piece of the American Dream!”

A lot of students face difficulties finding supportive advisement and making sure they are completing required classes to avoid the danger of not graduating on time. ASAP is committed to helping their students graduate in no more than three years. The goal of the program is to help you reach your highest potential while earning your associates degree.

“This program can be the answers to a lot of student’s prayers” said Martell. “Investing in an education but not knowing which direction to head first can be tough, which the case is for a lot of the students here at Queensborough.”

Is there a catch to all of this? Not really. The ASAP eligibility is quick, easy and simple to understand. You must be a New York State resident, agree to enter as a full-time student in an ASAP approved major, have a grade point average of a 2.0 or above (for continuing and transfer students) and need no more than two developmental course based on the CUNY Assessment exam. In other words, ASAP is there and ready to help nearly all of our students.