



**Significant Increases in Associate Degree Graduation Rates:
CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)
(March 1, 2018)**

Founded in 2007 with support from the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), ASAP is a comprehensive program for associate-degree students at nine CUNY colleges: Borough of Manhattan, Bronx, Hostos, Kingsborough, LaGuardia, and Queensborough Community Colleges; Medgar Evers College; College of Staten Island; and New York City College of Technology. ASAP's supports include financial resources (tuition waivers for students in receipt of financial aid with a gap need, textbook assistance, and New York City Transit MetroCards), structured pathways to support academic momentum (full-time enrollment, block scheduled first-year courses, immediate and continuous enrollment in developmental education, winter and summer course-taking), and support services (comprehensive and personalized advisement, tutoring, career development services, and early engagement opportunities to build a connected community).

The program is committed to graduating at least 50% of students within three years through provision of comprehensive support services and financial resources that remove barriers to full-time study, build student resiliency, and support timely degree completion. Currently less than 25% of CUNY community college students and only 16% of urban community college students nationally graduate within three years.¹ There have been eleven ASAP cohorts totaling 33,800 students admitted across all participating colleges, with the first cohort entering in fall 2007. In academic year 2017-18, ASAP will serve over 21,000 students.

ASAP has proven to be one of CUNY's most successful community college initiatives with students in the program graduating at a rate more than double that of similar students. The program has garnered national attention and been rigorously evaluated. ASAP evaluation includes ongoing internal analysis by CUNY utilizing a quasi-experimental constructed comparison group design, a five-year experimental design random assignment study led by MDRC, and cost-benefit analysis led by Professor Henry Levin and the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education (CBCSE) at Teachers College Columbia University. Key findings from CUNY's evaluation of ASAP² reveal:

- ASAP students graduate at more than double the rates of non-ASAP students. To date, across seven cohorts, ASAP has an average graduation rate of 53.4% vs. 24.6% of comparison group students.
- Students who start ASAP with developmental needs graduate at high rates just like students who enter fully skills proficient: After three years, 47.8% of ASAP students with developmental needs and 60.6% of fully skills proficient ASAP students have graduated vs. 20.9% of non-ASAP students with developmental needs and 29.9% of fully skills proficient non-ASAP students.
- There are large and significant differences between ASAP and comparison group students in terms of retention rates, movement through developmental course work, credit accumulation, and graduation rates. These differences are seen as early as the first semester and continue to be found at all junctures over three years.
- Students from underrepresented groups appear to benefit more from ASAP than other students.
- When longer term outcomes across CUNY are considered, ASAP students are more likely to earn a degree. Six years after beginning, 63.6% of ASAP first-time freshmen had earned either an associate or baccalaureate degree (or both) vs. 43.3% of comparison group students.

EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF ASAP

MDRC has released a three-year report from its random assignment study of ASAP, which includes a sample of 900 students.³ Participants include ASAP students from cohorts three and four from three community colleges who entered with developmental education needs. Students were randomly assigned to either the program group or control group, ensuring that the two groups were similar in terms of background and motivation and differences in outcomes are a direct result of participating in ASAP. MDRC's three-year report found that ASAP students outperformed the control group students with respect to persistence, credit accumulation, full-time enrollment, three-year graduation, and



transfer to four-year colleges. The three-year graduation rate for ASAP students was nearly double the graduation rate of control group students. MDRC stated that “ASAP’s effects are the largest MDRC has found in any of its evaluations of community college reforms. The model offers a highly promising strategy to markedly accelerate credit accumulation and increase graduation rates among educationally and economically disadvantaged populations” (Scrivener et al. 2015).

ASAP was also the subject of a comprehensive cost-benefit study led by Dr. Henry Levin of the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education (CBCSE) at Teachers College Columbia University.⁴ Part one of Dr. Levin’s study, a cost-effectiveness analysis of ASAP, reveals that despite higher up-front costs, the average cost per three-year ASAP graduate is *lower* than for comparison group graduates. The study found an average savings of \$6,500 per graduate. Part two of Dr. Levin’s analysis looked at the benefits of timely graduation, both for the individual and for the public sector, by examining increased earnings and tax revenues as well as reduced costs for social services such as public health, public assistance, and criminal justice. The study found that an investment in ASAP has large financial returns for both the taxpayer and the student. For every dollar invested in ASAP by the taxpayer, \$3.50 are returned per associate degree conferred in the form of increased tax revenues and social service savings, and for each dollar invested by the ASAP student, \$12.20 are returned through increased earnings. Dr. Levin and his team conclude that the total net benefits for 1,000 ASAP students is \$46.5 million *higher* than for 1,000 comparison group students who do not enroll in the program.

ASAP EXPANSION AND REPLICATION

Thanks to generous support from the City of New York ASAP will expand to serve 25,000 students per year by academic year 2018-2019. Part of the ASAP expansion will include serving more Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) majors and a campus-wide expansion at Bronx Community College to serve most incoming first-time, full-time freshmen by academic year 2018-2019.

In addition to serving more CUNY students seeking their associate degree, ASAP is also beginning to serve students who are pursuing their bachelor’s degree. CUNY received funding from the Robin Hood Foundation to adapt the ASAP model to a four-year college setting at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, which launched the Accelerate, Complete, Engage (ACE) program in fall 2015 with a pilot cohort of 262 students, served a second cohort of 357 students in fall 2017 with funding support from NYC Opportunity and the Jewish Foundation for the Education of Women, and will welcome a third cohort of students through continued support from NYC Opportunity.

To expand the reach of ASAP beyond New York City, CUNY partnered with MDRC and the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) to support adaptations of ASAP at three Ohio community colleges. MDRC released an initial report on the early findings from this Ohio demonstration⁵, which showed that the ASAP-like programs boosted full-time enrollment and semester-to-semester persistence, and increased the number of credits attempted and earned. To support fall 2018 pilot launches, CUNY ASAP has provided technical assistance at two additional colleges, Westchester Community College (NY) and Skyline College (CA), through a grant from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation “Moving the Needle” initiative.

¹ Source: CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) and CUNY OIRA analysis of data from the Institutional Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS).

² Complete ASAP evaluation findings can be found at: <http://www.cuny.edu/academics/programs/notable/asap/about/evaluation.html>.

³ MDRC ASAP reports can be found online at: <http://www.mdrc.org/publication/doubling-graduation-rates>

⁴ Dr. Levin’s reports can be found online at: http://cbcse.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Levin-ASAP-Cost-Effectiveness-Report_092412_FINAL-5.pdf and http://cbcse.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Levin_ASAP_Benefit_Cost_Report_FINAL_05222013.pdf.

⁵ MDRC’s Early Findings from the Ohio demonstration can be found online at: http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/ASAP_Ohio_final.pdf.

Profile of ASAP Students
Fall 2007 to Fall 2017 Cohorts¹

Total Enrollment²	N	33,827
College		
BMCC	%	24.1
Bronx	%	13.1
Hostos	%	7.5
Kingsborough	%	12.4
LaGuardia	%	15.5
Medgar Evers	%	3.8
NYCT	%	3.9
Queensborough	%	15.1
Staten Island	%	4.6
Gender		
Male	%	42.7
Female	%	57.4
Ethnicity		
American Indian/Native Alaskan	%	0.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	%	12.2
Black	%	32.6
Hispanic	%	44.0
White	%	10.9
Age Group		
18 or younger	%	47.4
19	%	16.1
20 to 22	%	18.2
23 to 29	%	11.8
30 or older	%	6.5
Mean Age	mean	21.2
Admission Type		
First-time Freshmen	%	66.6
Transfer Students	%	7.4
Continuing Students	%	26.0
Developmental Students³		
Initial Remedial Need ⁴	%	74.2
At Time of Entry into ASAP	%	42.3
College Admissions Average⁵		
	mean	75.0
GED Recipients		
	%	6.4
Pell or TAP Receipt⁶		
	%	83.2

¹ Includes ASAP students admitted in fall 2007 through fall 2017. Medgar Evers College joined in fall 2014 and NYC College of Technology and College of Staten Island joined in fall 2015.

² Excludes a small percentage of students whose data were not available.

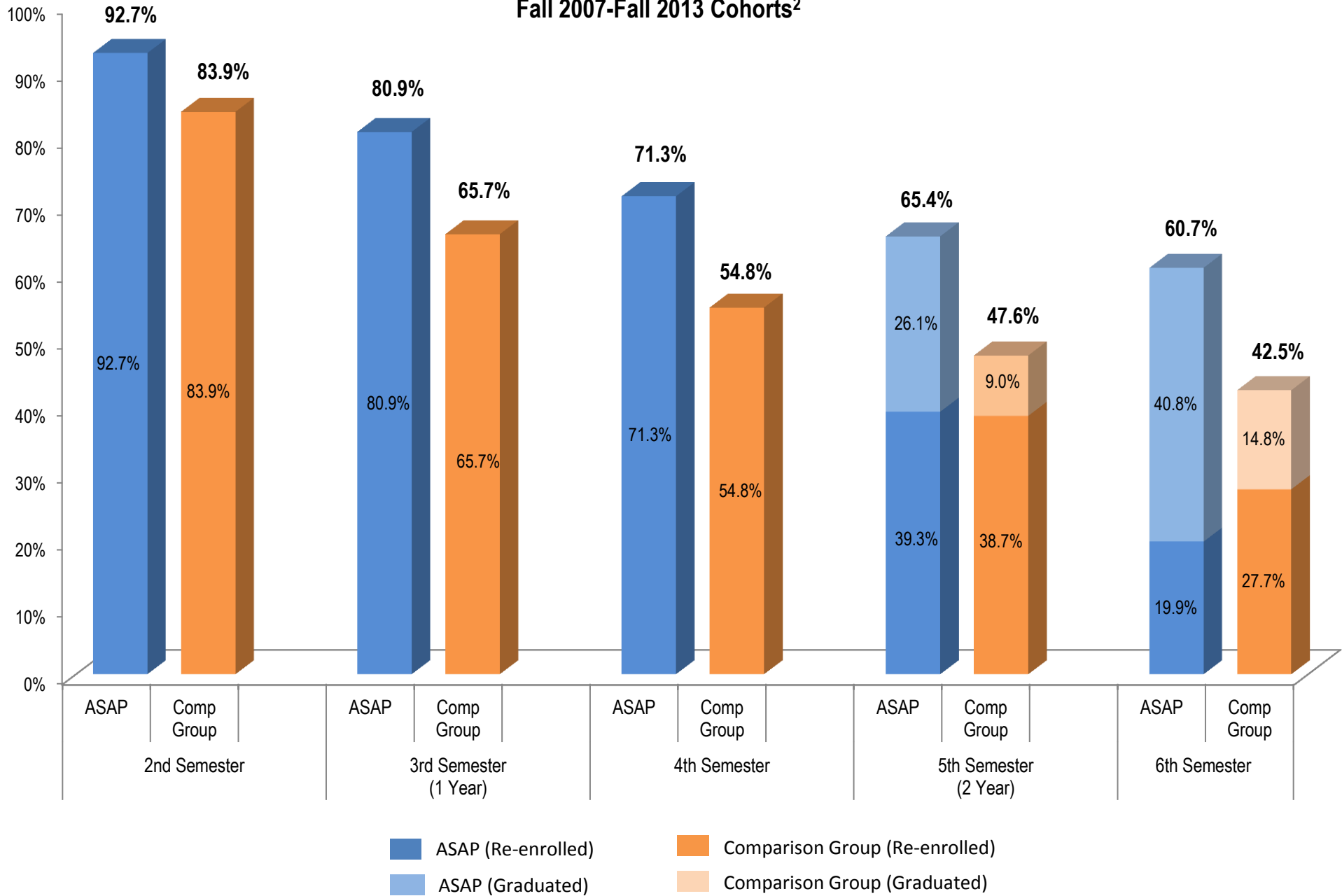
³ Students who required developmental coursework. Developmental need data comes from CUNY's Administrative Data Warehouse. Includes students from cohort 1 who were required to address all developmental needs prior to entering ASAP. Data for cohort 11 is not yet available and therefore excluded from the average.

⁴ Initial remediation need is based on first CUNY Skills Assessment test taken and/or test exemption.

⁵ Data is not available for all students; Data is missing for most transfer students and students who applied as direct admits to the college.

⁶ Students who received either a Federal Pell Grant and/or a New York State Tuition Assistance Program Grant. Based on a preliminary data source.

Average Retention Rates of ASAP and Comparison Group Students¹: Fall 2007-Fall 2013 Cohorts²

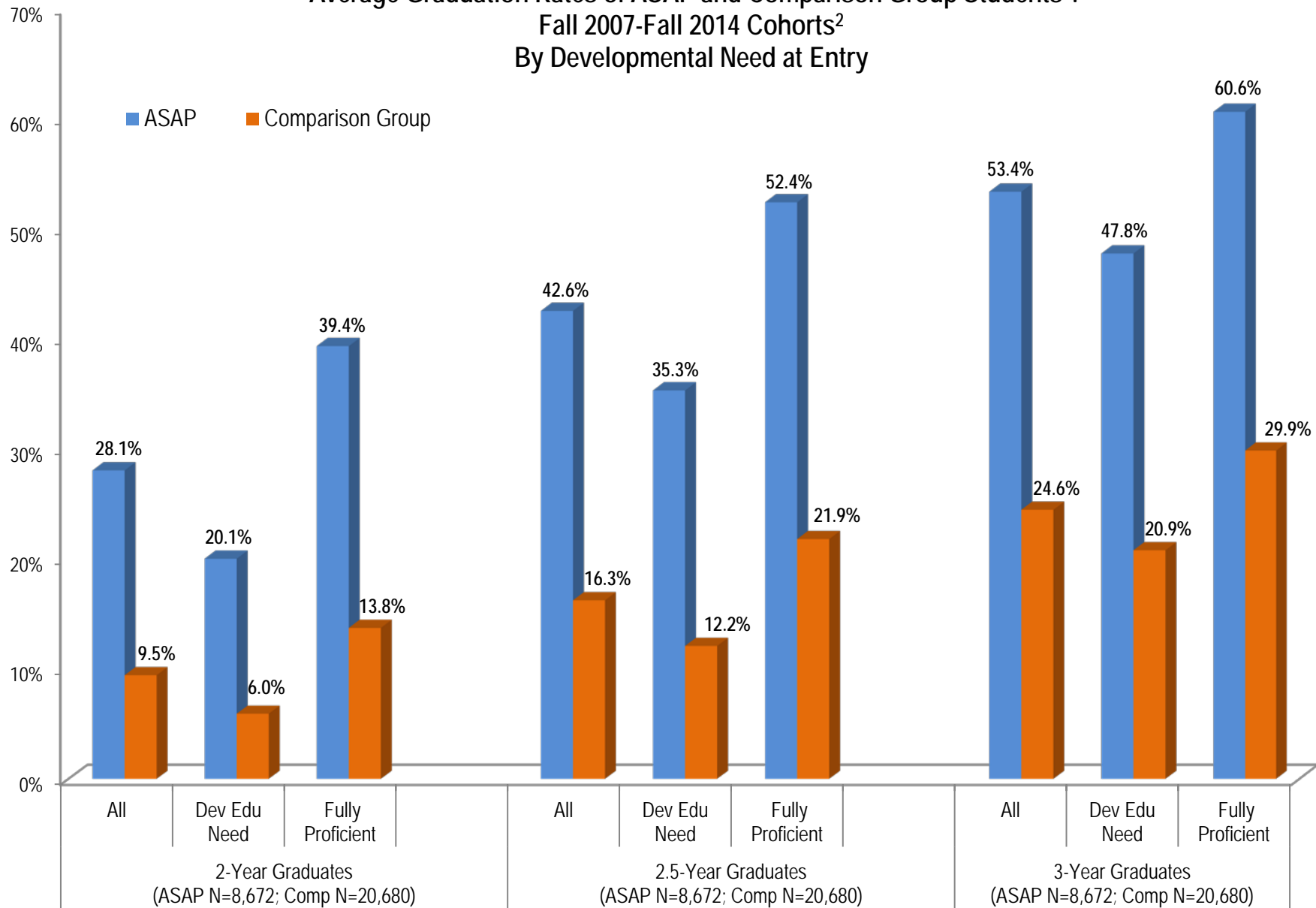


¹ Comparison groups are constructed for each cohort and consist of students enrolled at each college who met ASAP eligibility criteria but did not participate in ASAP.

² Semester to semester retention at college of entry. Second and third semester retention rates for cohorts entering in fall 2007, fall 2009, spring 2010, fall 2010, fall 2011, fall 2012 and fall 2013 (ASAP N=6,394; Comp group N=22,824). Fourth and fifth semester retention rates for same cohorts except fall 2013 (ASAP N=4,547; Comp group N=19,090). Sixth semester retention rate for same cohorts except fall 2012 and fall 2013 (ASAP N=2,985; Comp group N=15,042). Overall rates are calculated by averaging individual cohort rates.

Source: CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

**Average Graduation Rates of ASAP and Comparison Group Students¹:
Fall 2007-Fall 2014 Cohorts²
By Developmental Need at Entry**



¹Comparison groups are constructed for each cohort and consist of students enrolled at each college who met ASAP eligibility criteria but did not participate in ASAP.

²Students who have officially graduated through summer 2016. The graduation rates include fall 2007 through fall 2014 ASAP cohorts and their comparison groups. Overall graduation rates are calculated by averaging the individual cohort graduation rates. Developmental education need or skills proficiency is based on status at time of entry.

Sources: CUNY Administrative Data Warehouse (ADW); ASAP partner colleges.