



About College Now

College Now, a partnership between the City University of New York (CUNY) and the New York City Department of Education (DOE) is a FREE college transition/dual enrollment program for New York City public high school students. It provides college credit courses, pre-college courses, college and career awareness courses and activities, full day summer programs, STEM Research Academy and access to CUNY campus facilities and events. College Now courses are offered before and after high school students' day or on Saturdays, on college campuses and in high schools. In the 2019-2020 academic year, it served over 23,000 students from 480+ high schools, and had over 33,000 individual enrollments. 89% of the students received grades of A, B, or C in their courses and earned college credits.

Participation in College Now significantly boosts student success once they enter college. By the end of the 1st semester at CUNY, first year students with College Now experience earned an average of 17.31 cumulative credits (a total of credits transferred and credits earned) compared to 9.94 credits for those without. This difference is even higher for Black and Hispanic College Now alumni and for students in the academic middle as defined by their ELA Regents scores of 65-80.

Transition to Online Learning in Spring 2020

In the spring 2020 semester, College Now had over 16,000 enrollments by more than 14,000 students in 701 College Now sections of college credit courses across the University. Under the leadership of campus College Now staff, with support from relevant academic departments and campus teaching and learning, and technology specialists, all sections were converted to distance learning mode along the CUNY timeline from the cessation of all in-person instruction on March 13, 2020 to the start of online instruction on March 19, and over a recalibration period from March 27 to April 2. Starting with April 2, College Now Central Office staff held weekly College Now coordinators' Office Hours via Zoom with about 26-32 College Now staff from across the University present at each session to discuss issues such as supporting faculty and students in transition to distance education, replacing planned summer programs with online courses, summer and fall recruitment, planning for the fall, and sharing other relevant resources.

"Patience and compassion," Pieranna Pieroni, College Now director at Brooklyn College states in her annual report, were the most important ingredients in the support of College Now students during the rapid shift to online learning. Maziely Crisostomo, director of the program at Baruch College, points out that "school for many students is not only a source of learning, but also a safe space where they can receive necessary counseling and mentoring, a warm meal and a safe space to be themselves." These sentiments were shared by the staff across College Now programs who all found ways to stay connected; students were supported in virtual office hours where they could log in and chat with staff about anything from homework help to mental health check-ins. Many provided real time access to CN staff through Remind or Google Voice so students could reach out immediately if they had issues and receive a response within minutes. Live social media events were held for current and prospective students. For the programs that had tutors or mentors, they played especially important roles during this time. They helped faculty monitor and report attendance, promoted class discussion and facilitated group work, held reviews, individual tutoring and informal, college-related "drop-in" sessions.

Across all program reports, three essential elements in a successful online transition emerged: faculty trained in Blackboard (Bb), students in possession of devices, and with a working knowledge of how to access their CUNYfirst and Bb accounts so that they could log onto their courses.

Although most faculty were familiar with Blackboard, many had not used Blackboard as an exclusive instructional tool. All programs report training of their faculty in the effective use of online platforms and in delivering online instruction as the most important professional development activity of the spring and summer semesters. "Instructors devised ways to deliver content, replace hands-on activities, promote interaction, and be present for young people missing in-person contact with peers and caring school professionals."

Ensuring that students had devices required constant communication with high school partners who were distributing devices to students. The most time-consuming task was ensuring that students were accessing their courses since connectivity issues continued to be a problem for some students. Online orientation prior to the first day of class in which students “meet” their instructors in video conferencing breakout rooms and provide them with their contact information or log into their CUNYfirst account and access their course on Blackboard were one way of confirming that students can access their courses.

Through the collaboration with the library, academic departments and information technology departments, many College Now programs had instructors develop Open Educational Resources (OER) for summer and fall 2020 courses. This was one unexpected benefit of this rapid shift to online learning which will help reduce the cost of textbooks in the future considerably. There is a sense that this COVID-19 pandemic, although challenging, has provided the opportunity to push forward technological changes that will push College Now into the future. A LaGuardia instructor reported to the College Now staff: *“Unlike the Spring 2020 switchover which was dizzying at best, I had the chance to restructure my course and prepare with the benefit of taking CUNY’s Online Training Essential workshop through CUNY’s School for Professional Studies. While the content did not shift much, the structure shifted dramatically, and, to my surprise, all for the better. Our students were active, engaged, and extremely productive.”*

The Research Evaluation and Program Support (REPS) team designed a survey to find out students’ experience with distance education during the pandemic. The survey links were sent out to students who had taken a College Now course during spring, summer or fall of 2020. There were many findings that came out of the initial survey sample including that 90% of respondents would recommend taking a College Now remote course to their friends, and that 66% would take a College Now online course even when the program is back in person, while those who wouldn’t, stated the need for in-person connection as the main reason. Overall, they found the online courses challenging but rewarding. Although the survey found that courses with live instruction had higher satisfaction rates than asynchronous courses, a large majority of students did not turn on their cameras during live class sessions. When asked what the most engaging activities were, the most frequent answer was discussions with explanations such as: *“...everyone gathering around to discuss homework or classwork was always a lot of fun,”* and *“Responding to other students on the discussion board and getting feedback from the professor.”* As for home environment, while the majority said they always or usually had a designated place to work without distractions, about a quarter of respondents said they were only sometimes or even never able to work without distractions.

Highlights from the 2019-20 Academic Year

Math Co-Requisite Courses

In an ongoing effort to increase the number of math opportunities for College Now students, despite the online learning environment, Pete Williams, College Now director at BMCC reports an expansion of co-requisite math courses to include quantitative reasoning in addition to statistics. Matthew Britain, director at NYCT’s program observed a significant increase in the enrollment in pre-calculus in spring 2020, a direct consequence of CUNY’s new proficiency index which ended placement testing and changed the eligibility requirements for this course, increasing the pool of eligible applicants and the re-enrollment of students who completed the MAT1275 co-requisite course which also had a much higher enrollment. College Now programs at York and Queensborough Community College both continued to offer math co-requisite courses to the students in their partner schools.

Springboard to CUNY

A pilot initiative aimed at NYC DOE seniors who applied to Queens College but have not participated in the College Now program ran at Queens College in spring 2020. Marci Goodman, director of the College Now program there worked with the director of admissions at Queens to select qualified applicants and invite them to take Psychology 101, bypassing the regular CN admissions process. She reported that “the result was a resounding success since the majority of students enrolled in the course decided to enroll in Queens College as freshmen for fall 2020.”

Support for College Now Alumni Matriculating at Local Campuses

College Now programs hold events for incoming freshmen with CN experience to advise and assist them with credit transfer and to provide a familiar welcome. Such events were held at Lehman, Brooklyn, KBCC, and QBCC. LaGuardia’s Transition Center, established to assist College Now and Early College alumni matriculating at LaGuardia, served 141 alumni in FY20.

Perkins Innovation and Modernization Grant

College Now was awarded a three-year Perkins Innovation and Modernization grant from the USDOE in October 2019. One of the goals of the grant is to emphasize the importance of taking college credit courses for students in CTE high schools with low participation in the College Now program. Key to that is an early start in 10th grade with First Year Seminar (FYS), a one-credit course to introduce students to the program and prepare them for the next college credit course. Susana Rivera, College Now director at Bronx Community College, was instrumental in getting the program off the ground and handling all logistics connected to FYS. Travaras Geter, associate director at Hostos Community College, Pete Williams, director at BMCC, and Matthew Britain, director at NYCT, were responsible for student recruitment. The grant implementation had many challenges, not least among them the move to online instruction which caused more students to withdraw than usual, and we were approved to use the funds to recruit an additional cohort of 10th grade students.

Myself Third: Spirit of New York Scholarship

Despite the timing of the transition to distance learning coinciding with the application deadline for the Myself Third Scholarship, 35 students submitted applications in consideration for the two \$5,000 scholarships being offered. On Tuesday, June 9, an online award ceremony was held to celebrate the two winners. Ceremony attendees included CN campus and K-16 Initiatives staff, teachers and counselors from the winners' high schools and several past scholarship winners.

In the 2019- 2020 academic year there were 6,710 NYC DOE seniors who had participated in College Now programs across the University during their time in high school. 5,421 of them graduated high school with 3-9 college credits earned in the program, and an additional 1,190 with 10+ credits.

The CUNY College Now program has adapted well to online learning. As Maziely Crisostomo points out in her annual report, our major highlight for the FY 19-20 academic year is the strength and resilience of our College Now students, instructors and staff.