



College Now FY 21 Annual Report An Academic Year Under COVID Pandemic



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, 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 2020-2021 academic year, it served over 21,000 students from 470+ high schools, and had over 30,000 individual enrollments. 91% of the students received passing grades in their courses and earned college credits.

Participation in College Now significantly boosts students' success once they enter college. By the end of the first semester, students with College Now experience who entered CUNY in fall 2020 as first time freshmen earned an average of 17.53 cumulative credits (credits transferred and earned) compared to 9.95 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.

Program Benchmarks - Enrollments and Outcomes

Enrollments and Students		Course Pass Rates		Students' Pass Rates
Enrollments	Students	# of courses with 80+% pass rates	# of courses with below 80% pass rate	Received a grade of A,B, C, P or CR
FY 21 -30,444 (FY 20 - 33,904)	FY 21 -21,336 (FY 20 - 23,526)	973/1,177 or 83% of course sections	204/1,177 or 17% of course sections	96% of all student enrollments resulted in a passing grade

FY 21 started with an online summer semester which was not the usual full day program with an afternoon component, but consisted of a single course. Somewhat unexpectedly, the enrollment was higher than in a typical summer semester. Perhaps it was accessible to more students since it no longer required a full day commitment and all classes were online.

Apart from the summer semester, there was a considerable decrease in the enrollment and number of students served due to a significant budget reduction the program experienced in FY21. Compared to the prior academic year, the program had 3,460 fewer enrolments, and served 2,190 fewer students. To soften the impact of budget cuts on enrollment, all OTPS expenditures were eliminated. Fortunately, most programs were able to take advantage of free Open Educational Resources (OER).

The overall pass rate of 91% exceeded that of the previous year; however, some programs noted a higher rate of W grades, possibly because recognizing the unique and unprecedented challenges that the pandemic presented for students, the CUNY administration extended the W period to the end of the semester and more students decided to take advantage of that.

Overall Reflections on the Year's Challenges and Opportunities

Since spring 2020 and its sudden and rapid transition to online learning, College Now staff has maintained the program with extraordinary diligence, patience and concern for the wellbeing and success of their students. They found ways to stay connected with students, ensure that instructors

were supported to deliver effective online instruction and that students had the devices and knowledge necessary to participate in online learning. After the rapid switch to online in the spring, in summer 2020 more in depth training in Blackboard helped instructors gain better facility with online instruction. To deliver the program, all faculty had to be trained in Blackboard (Bb); all students had to possess working devices; and know how to access their CUNYfirst and Bb accounts to log onto their courses. The program staff spent the year building and perfecting various aspects of their virtual office space including virtual office hours in which students could receive live help with their courses, CUNYfirst issues, and academic or social and emotional support. They communicated with students through live social media events, email, and direct outreach to parents. The new modes of operations that the pandemic imposed and the speed with which they had to be undertaken and perfected have also resulted in some new program features that programs plan to keep in the future. There was also an increase in the number of programs using the CUNY online application.

Another positive consequence of the switch to online learning is a rapid growth in the use of OERs, which were used in all but a handful of courses and significantly reduced the cost of textbooks, which helped soften the impact of the reduction in the CN program University-wide budget.

The new facility with conducting the program online has made it easier to bring multiple stakeholders quickly together without major disruptions to their work day. Since the start of the pandemic, the frequency of University-wide CN coordinators' meetings was increased to twice a month to ensure that CN staff had a place to exchange information, share resources and strategies to deal with rapidly changing situations and support each other. The meeting format for University-wide College Now coordinators was changed to accommodate small group discussions in which such conversations could take place and allow for contributions from many campuses.

All programs would like to keep at least some of their classes online for students who prefer that mode of instruction. With the return to in-person instruction, programs may want to reintroduce full day summer programs, but will also keep stand-alone in-person and /or online college credit courses for students with summer work obligations, or for those who cannot participate during the school year. A survey conducted by Research Evaluation and Program Support (REPS) staff among College Now students from spring, summer and fall 2020 semesters shows that 66 percent of students would take an online course again even when it is safe to return to in-person, for reasons such as commute, convenience or personal preference, while 34 percent would not consider it and long for a return to in-person learning.

Many essential functions of the program will benefit tremendously from a return to in-person operations. Some programs already held fully in-person or hybrid classes on campus during FY 21; all are eager to return to as much in-person instruction as possible and as soon as it is safe. Most coordinators report an urgent need to get back into their partner high schools for recruitment visits to rebuild their programs or to reconnect with high school staff and students. Regardless of whether the program experienced a decrease or surge in their enrollment, rebuilding and strengthening the core program after COVID, re-connecting in person with partner schools and welcoming students on campus is reported as the main focus for each program.

Highlights from the 2020-21 Academic Year

Collaboration with AP for All

One initiative that the program started piloting in spring 2021 with DOE's AP for All is to offer culturally responsive college credit courses to students across the city regardless of their high school's CN

partnership. It started with two courses each in spring and fall of 2021 offered by Medgar Evers and Hostos and has expanded to seven courses planned for spring 2022. The online instructional mode is what makes this initiative possible and we are continuing to perfect the logistics of student outreach, recruitment and support.

Math Co-Requisite Courses

The success with the online instruction in math co-requisite courses presents an opportunity to expand the reach of much needed courses city wide relying on online delivery. Completion of a math co-requisite course makes students college ready in math and for many non-STEM majors satisfies the required college credit math course. The number of students served across programs with math co-requisite courses continues to grow. A total of 643 students were served with a success rate of 84%. Just under half of those students were served in collaboration between BMCC CN and CUNY LINCT program which provides intensive math professional development to high school instructors who teach a high school math course during the school day in the fall semester which prepares students for success in the college credit math co-requisite course provided by BMCC CN in the spring. BMCC's Math 160.5 Quantitative Reasoning co-requisite course was offered in this collaboration with a success rate of 81%.

Lehman offered multiple sections of MAT 126 Quantitative Reasoning, which fulfills a CUNY pathways requirement and is open to students who have successfully completed an Algebra I course but do not have a 70+ CC Math Regents score. Queensborough took advantage of the math department accelerated learning program (ALP) to offer MA-119/MA-10 ALP which allows students in the ALP section to take the MA010-Elementary Algebra ALP support course (2-hours per week, zero credits) and MA119-College Algebra (4-hours per week, 3 credits) in the same semester and satisfy the CUNY math requirement even for STEM majors. York continued to offer MAT 11 Statistics with a support workshop whose goal is to ensure that students receive grades which would qualify them for entry into competitive STEM majors at York.

Support for College Now Alumni and Events for Seniors

CN programs engage with their students and alumni in many ways. Brooklyn College began holding "Send-offs" in June 2020 to celebrate all students' achievements and give graduating seniors in particular a refresher on accessing their CUNY transcripts, arranging credit transfer and evaluation, and being proactive/self-advocating as they transition to college. In addition, the program hosted senior check-ins: "Weekly Wednesday" workshops: College Applications from September 2020 - June 2021, and held a Senior College Decision Day Celebration on April 24.

City College engaged CN alumni to assist with the virtual orientation sessions. The alumni greeted the new students and shared their sentiments on college expectations, college choice being the right fit, how to select a major, navigate the campus, ways to spend free time, the importance of attending professor's office hours and learning how to advocate for themselves.

Hostos celebrated the achievements of their students by offering two awards: Hostos College Now Persistence Award - for the students who have successfully earned at least 15 credits in consecutive semesters through College Now, with no withdrawals, earning a C or better; and Hostos College Now Pathway Award - for the student earning the most College Now credits after having started in a College Now pre-college program. In addition, Hostos partners with Let's Get Ready (LGR) to support alumni into and through college through LGR's Success Initiative. The LGR SAT program offers tutoring and college exploration services to their students at partnering high schools.

Lehman co-hosted with the Office of Admissions on a workshop for HS seniors to assist them in their CUNY applications.

At La Guardia, growing and strengthening the Transition Center, supported by the college administration to attract more CN alumni to the college, continues to be one of the program's top priorities. In FY19 and FY20, the transition manager helped 141 former College Now and ECI students circumvent the regular college admissions process; they were admitted, matriculated at LaGuardia, received academic and financial aid advisement and other counseling as needed through the Transition Center. The CN recruiter collaborates with the Transition Center manager to strengthen alumni relations and develop a CN alumni network.

College Now for Careers

The CN director at BMCC continued to work on increasing access to career related courses and course sequences. They offered BUS 104 and CED 315, two courses which incorporate students' internship participation into the course requirement for students in the Career Wise apprenticeship program. Additionally, a sequence of health related courses is available to students from High School for Health Professions and Human Services.

The Perkins Innovation and Modernization Grant funded the second cohort of sophomores taking First Year Seminar (FYS) in the spring. Although outreach events to students and parents were held, the participation was lower than expected. The implementation of planned activities for the students in the two grant cohorts continues to be a challenge.

The CN director at QBCC has leveraged the program's relationships with partner schools to engage three college departments in the process of creating Career and Technical Education (CTE) articulation agreements with which can give students college credits for a successful completion of a designated high school course(s).

DYCD's Career Ready Work Learn Grow (WLG)

For the second year in a row, CUNY Central collaborated with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) on the Work Learn Grow program. During the fall 2020 semester KBCC CN offered Student Development 10 and 11 (one credit course) and Brooklyn CN offered a pre-college Media Literacy Course to students not eligible for a college credit courses. In addition to the College Now course, students participated in DYCD provided enrichment components and paid internships. The program was offered at fifty-two high schools and 1,773 students were registered.

STEM Research Academy

With much creativity and planning, the STEMA RA team was able to successfully address the big challenges of summer 2020 - limited or no access to laboratories, limited capacity of research mentors, and providing engaging hands-on experiences in an online format and create a successful model of remote research in a virtual format. During the 2020 summer research experience, 88 students were matched with 18 research mentors. Students worked in a wide range of research projects and topics including NYC watershed tracking and characterization, virtual gene sequencing, tropical storm energy, space weather investigation, greenhouse gas quantification and generally learning to utilize and manipulate large STEM datasets. Students were also invited to participate in newly developed science communication-based activities which included the STEMA RA Virtual Student Research Panel and the

STEM RA Virtual Research Project Exhibition. In spring 2021, a new STEM RA cohort comprised 260 students from 68 schools enrolled in various College Now pre-college and college credit science courses.

Myself Third: Spirit of New York Scholarship

On June 15, 2021 an online award ceremony was held to celebrate the three winners of a \$5,000 Myself Third Scholarship. A total of 81 applications were submitted to campuses and after four rounds of evaluation, three winners were selected representing Hostos, Kingsborough and Queensborough Community Colleges. Ceremony attendees included CN campus and K-16 Initiatives staff, teachers and counselors from the winners' high schools and past scholarship winners.

Conference Presentations

Elizabeth Wilson, Director of School-College Partnerships at Hostos, presented with Jordan Wesley of Let's Get Ready at two virtual conferences. The presentation at Impact Conference, whose mission is to create a reflective learning space that centers student voices while challenging their understanding of service, action, and advocacy in pursuit of social justice, included a panel of Hostos CNOW/LGR alumni Julia Ramirez, Kevin King, Dean Trusty, and Christine Laboy, who spoke to the power of College Now and LGR as they developed academically, educationally, and professionally. At Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development, the goal of their presentation was to share a little bit about what they have learned in 12 years of partnering to support students who will be the first in their family to go to college and students who are historically underrepresented on college campuses.

REPS and the College Now Central team delivered a presentation at the Association for the Education Finance and Policy (AEFP) Conference in March 2021 titled *College Now: Staying Engaged while Going Remote* in which they presented the findings of the survey conducted by REPS to learn more about the College Now students' experience with distance learning.

Senior Lists with Unofficial CN Transcripts

For several years now, CN Central Office has been providing programs with the lists of their seniors and their unofficial College Now transcript with all CN courses taken as well as instructions for transferring credits they earned in CN. CUNY Admissions staff (BCC, KBCC, Hunter) have been reaching out to CN directors with requests for those lists for their recruitment purposes.

There were 13,126 DOE seniors in 2020-2021 who had participated in College Now programs across the University during their time in high school. 10,534 of them graduated high school with 3-9 college credits earned in the program, and an additional 1,665 with 10+ credits.

