

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2023

Start: 1:07 P. M.

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HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: HON. ERIC DINOWITZ, CHAIR

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

CHARLES BARRON

GALE A. BREWER

OSWALD FELIZ

INNA VERNIKOV

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

A P P E A R A N C E S

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Vice Chancellor The Office of Academic Affairs
at CUNY

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[SEE NEXT]

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Jennifer Barnes-Balenciaga
Student at Borough of Manhattan Community
College (BMCC); Member of IMPACT Peer Mentoring
at BMCC; Member of the NYC Commission on Gender
Equality; Director of the Crystal La'Beija
Organizing Fellowship (CLOF)

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon, and welcome to today's New York City Council Hearing for The Committee on Higher Education. At this time, we ask that you silence all cell phones and electronic devices to minimize distractions throughout the hearing. If you wish to submit testimony you would like to submit for the record, you may do so via email to testimony@council.nyc.gov, once again, that is testimony@council.nyc.gov. We thank you for your cooperation.

Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ:

[GAVELING IN] [GAVEL SOUND]

Good afternoon, I am Council Member Eric Dinowitz, Chair of The Committee on Higher Education. Welcome to our Oversight on CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs Initiative -- also known as ASAP.

It is fitting that we are having this hearing in April, which is Community College Month nationwide, and; therefore, a great time to celebrate the work of CUNY's community colleges.

We look forward in this hearing to learning about the ASAP Initiative -- which is offered at six

communities colleges and three senior colleges -- as well as more about the evaluative data that both CUNY and well respected external evaluators have collected and used to judge the success of ASAP.

As always, we are interested in the way that ASAP is advertised and promoted to potential CUNY students. You know that I believe it is always about getting the word out.

We are also interested in the selection process used to decide which campuses will operate ASAP, as well as the selection process used to identify and enroll individual students. The demographic data for enrolled students including gender, race, ethnicity, and income level, are all relevant here.

Furthermore, the Committee is concerned as usual and learning how students with disabilities are accommodated in ASAP.

Finally, the Committee also seeks an understanding of what support CUNY needs to extend ASAP both to other campuses and to more students at each campus.

At our February hearing, I said that it is not often in education that we find a program that has no downsides, no tradeoffs, no drawbacks. At the time I

was talking about CUNY's College Preparation Initiatives for middle and high school students, and how they demonstrably improve the status quo for everyone involved -- for the students, for their families, and for their teachers and administrators both at their public secondary schools and at CUNY. And, now, I am about to say the same thing for ASAP. From what I have read so far, and from the data I have looked at, I just do not see any downside to ASAP and to the support that it provides to students. That support includes the following:

- Financial support, including tuition waivers for students whose financial aid does not cover all of their tuition expense, textbook assistance, and free MetroCards.
- Structured academic pathways to keep students on track for graduation, including block scheduling for their first-year courses; immediate and continued enrollment in developmental courses, when needed; and courses available and encouraged to be taken during the winter and summer breaks.
- Personal support services, including personal advisement, tutoring, and career services.

I mean, I... This is what college should be for all students. In fact, the big question is, why don't we just call this 'college'.

I want to acknowledge that we have been joined by Council Member Barron, Member of the Higher Education Committee.

I would also like to thank Adam Staropoli, my Director of Legislation; Jenna Klaus, my Chief of Staff; Christina Yellamaty, Committee Counsel; Regina Paul, Policy Analyst; and Nia Hyatt, Senior Financial Analyst.

I would like to remind everyone who wishes to testify in person today, that you must fill out a witness slip, which is located on the desk of the Sergeant At Arms, near the entrance of this room. Please fill out this slip even if you have already registered in advance, that you will be testifying in person today.

To allow as many people as possible to testify, public testimony will be limited to three minutes per person, whether you are testifying in person or on Zoom.

I am also going to ask my colleagues to limit their questions and comments to five minutes.

Please note that witnesses who are here in person will testify before those who are signed into the Zoom webinar.

Now, in accordance with the rules of the Council, I would like to call the CUNY Administration up, and then I will administer the oath.

Please raise your right hand; Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, in your testimony before this committee, and to respond honestly to council member questions?

[ADMINISTRATION AFFIRMS]

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank You.

Thank you, and as a reminder to all of our witnesses, for the record, please state your name prior to the testimony.

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Good morning.. Or Good afternoon, My name is Alicia Maria Alvero, and good morning Chairperson Dinowitz, and members of The City Council Higher Education Committee.

Thank you for this great opportunity to speak you today about CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs Initiative, better known as ASAP.

I am a Vice Chancellor in CUNY's Office of Academic Affairs, and I am joined today by my fellow

colleagues, Christine Brongniart, University Director of ASAP and ACE; and Carey Manifold, Interim Assistant Dean for Advisement Office at Kingsborough Community College.

I appreciate the opportunity to reiterate some of the information that you have already stated and expand upon it.

So, founded in 2007, with support from New York City Center for Economic Opportunity, ASAP aims to graduate at least 50% of Associate Degree-Seeking Students within three years.

At the time that the program was launched CUNY's overall three-year Community College graduation rate was 13 percent -- just shy of the national urban community college graduation rate of 16 percent. CUNY believed that not only could we do better, but we had a moral imperative to do so. And with the support of then Mayor Bloomberg, CUNY created a comprehensive model designed to improve completion outcomes.

ASAP has consistently not only met, but also exceeded its ambitious graduation goals. To date, ASAP has served more than 88,000 students across 16 cohorts, and has an average three-year graduation

rate of 53 percent versus 25 percent for similar students not in ASAP. The program benefits all subgroups of students, and based on CUNY's analysis, narrows existing equity gaps for Black and Hispanic males. The program grew from an initial enrollment of 1,132 students across six community colleges to a maximum annual enrollment of 25,000 students across nine of our 10 associate degree granting colleges.

Guttman Community College is excluded, because the Guttman model incorporates many of the elements of ASAP.

Thanks to the generous support from the city and state of New York, who have supported the program's expansion over the years, ASAP students currently comprise approximately 42 percent of the full-time associate degree seeking population.

To give a snap shot of the ASAP population this academic year, the mean age of an ASAP student is 21, 52 percent of the population is female and 48 percent is male; 83 percent of ASAP students receive Pell or TAP, and their ethnic diversity reflects that of our general college population; 50 percent are Latinos, 25 percent are Black; 11 percent are Asian; and seven percent are white.

ASAP offers a robust package of recourses and services designed to help students gain and maintain academic momentum and create a connected community of staff and peers. ASAP financial resources include tuition and fee gap scholarships for students in receipt of financial aid, textbook assistance, and unlimited New York City Transit MetroCards.

Students make a commitment to pursue their education full time, which is facilitated through strategic and variable course offerings designed to accommodate a variety of schedules.

ASAP also encourages and provides financial support for winter and summer course taking, and requires immediate and continuous enrollment in corequisite courses as needed.

Integrated support services provided by the program include comprehensive and personalized advertisement, tutoring and supplemental instruction, career development services, and early pre-matriculation engagement opportunities to build a connected community.

ASAP has garnered national recognition, most notably winning the Innovation in American Government Award from the Ash Center for Democratic Governance

and Innovation and Harvard University's John F. Kennedy's School of Government in 2020, and has come to be replicated in 11 institutions across six states.

ASAP has also been well-researched, MDRC a research organization created by The Ford Foundation and a group of federal agencies, has stated that ASAP's affects are the largest it has found any of its evaluations of community college reforms. They go on to state that the model offers a highly promising strategy to markedly accelerate credit accumulation and increase graduation rates among educationally and economically disadvantaged populations.

Just this week, Under Secretary, James Kvaal, acknowledged ASAP as a proven model that will be supported through the DOE's next funding round of the Post Secondary Student Success Grant Program.

ASAP was also the subject of a comprehensive benefit-cost analysis, led by Dr's Henry Levin and Emma Garcia, of the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education (CBCSE) at Teachers College, Columbia University.

The first part of their analysis revealed that despite higher upfront costs, the average cost per three year ASAP graduate was lower than for comparison group graduates. The study found an average savings of \$6,500 per graduate.

The second part of their analysis looked at the benefits of timely graduation both for the individual and the public sector by examining increased earnings and tax revenues, and reduced costs for social services such as public health, public assistance, and criminal justice.

The study found an investment in ASAP has significant financial returns for both the tax payer and the student. For every dollar invested in ASAP by the tax payer, \$3.50 are returned, per associate degree conferred in the form of increased tax revenues and social service savings. For each dollar invested by the ASAP student, \$12.20 are returned through increased earnings. The researchers concluded that the total net benefits for 1,000 ASAP students are \$46.5 million higher than for 1,000 comparison group students who did not enroll in ASAP. Based on these statistics, the 88,000 students ASAP

has served, translates to \$ 4,092,000,000 in net benefits -- Yes, that is a real number.

Another way of characterizing the return on investment is that the \$3,463 cost per student, represents a 25 percent increase investment in each student above the average cost per student. And it generates a 112 percent improvement in the graduation rate. So, the rate of improvement is 4.5 times greater than the increase in cost. This is three to four times greater than the we see in nationwide studies of community college investments.

Arguably, ASAP is considered a unilateral success, but recognize that this does not mean that we cannot and should not strive for more.

Approximately 40 percent of associate degree students are in the program. What can we do to capture more students? What is standing in their way? Are any of those obstacles within our control?

The average age of ASAP students is 21, yet almost 30 percent of Associate Degree-Seeking Students are 25 and over, and adults returning to school continue to be an increasing population in community colleges.

Can we use advances in technology and advisement tools to help increase three-year graduation rates beyond 53 percent?

We highlight these issues because we want to assure you that we are continuously striving to achieve maximum success with the generous support the city and state currently provides, and we are continuously working to set the stage for growth and expansion of our success.

To place our efforts into context, an additional \$3,463,000 would enable us to pilot expansion programs to target an additional 1,000 students while ensuring the quality and impact of ASAP's success does not waiver. An \$126,240,556 would be required to include all CUNY Community College students.

I conclude by stating that ASAP is part of CUNY's proud legacy of being a powerful engine of social mobility. We are deeply committed to ensuring that all of our students have every opportunity to achieve their educational goals and increase their social mobility.

Thank you for your time and unwavering, continued support and commitment. And with that, I turn it over to my colleagues.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Good afternoon, thank you to the Committee for calling this special session on CUNY ASAP. My name is Christine Brongniart, and I have the distinct honor of serving as the University Executive Director of ASAP and ACE over the past five years.

I am pleased to speak with you today about CUNY ASAP, a program that has made a profound and transformational impact on thousands of CUNY Associate Degree-Seeking Students, and has been embraced as the gold standard in evidence based interventions by local, state and federal policy makers.

A critical part of CUNY ASAP's success is its operational structure. ASAP operates as a consortium, in which the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs, and the nine partner colleges, each have a specific set of roles and responsibilities that maximize program success and efficiencies.

Each college has a fully dedicated ASAP program team, led by a director, who oversees an associate director, a team of advisors, each of whom have a maximum caseload of 150 students, a career specialist, and other program support staff.

College teams spearhead recruitment, deliver direct services to students, support program integration with other units at the college, and monitor student data.

The ASAP/ACE Central Office team, directs key administrative activities such a marketing and citywide outreach, fiscal oversight, research evaluation, data management, and program-wide staff training and professional development.

The program is deeply committed to the use of data for evaluation and program management purposes, and operates on a continuous improvement model.

Staff across the program work toward a common sent of benchmarks to help reach overall program graduation goals and use a standard homegrown data management system to produce reports and run queries to measure program efficacy at all levels.

We meet regularly within and across various communities of practice, for example, with our program directors and our career specialist, across the continuum to discuss and address common challenges, review data, and share best practices.

All colleges are aligned around a set of standard student performance and program contact or engagement benchmarks.

Student level data is pulled from CUNY's official data systems and ASAP's own database, and they are assessed on a timed basis and include enrollment; semester to semester college and program retention; academic performance data such as credits attempted and earned; GPA; contact with advisors -- both frequency and modality; as well as contact with other program staff; participation in career development activities; and lastly, of course, graduation outcomes.

Beyond the program's core goal focused on completion, the program also monitors other longer term outcomes. Most ASAP graduates, 93 percent, enroll in a bachelor's degree within one year of earning their associate degree. When longer term completion outcomes are considered, ASAP students are more likely to earn a degree. Six years after beginning, 64 percent of ASAP students have earned either an associate degree or a baccalaureate degree or both versus 43 percent of comparison group students.

We also continue to explore employment and earnings outcomes of our ASAP students. Based on an analysis of our earliest cohorts, 71 percent of ASAP graduates were employed in New York State one year after graduating with their associate degree, and 82 percent of ASAP graduates who went on to attain their bachelor's degree, were employed in New York State one year after graduation -- which is slightly higher than CUNY's overall rate.

We continue to pursue analyses of earnings and wage data in order to deepen our understanding of long term labor market outcomes, particularly for students in our more recent cohorts as the program shifted to include most majors.

Our in-house analyses are further validated by more rigorous external evaluations, most notably MDRC's five-year random assignment study of ASAP, which found the program's effects are "unparalleled in large scale experimental evaluations of programs in higher education" with nearly double the graduation rate for similar students. In a follow-up study of the random assignment study cohort six years after program entry MDRC found that ASAP both continues to increase graduation rates and enables

some students to their degrees faster than they would have otherwise.

In addition to continually building ASAP's evidence base, another key function of the ASAP/ACE Central Office team is to spearhead broad, citywide outreach and marketing to ensure that as many perspective CUNY students are aware of the program's supports as possible.

ASAP is a post-matriculation program, so our integrated marketing strategy aims to increase program awareness to support the programs enrollment goals as well as the University's.

ASAP employs standard marketing strategies like direct mail, two-way texting, and social media marketing. The program also collaborates closely with other CUNY partners such as The Office of K-16 Initiatives and pre-matriculation programs such as CUNY Start, as well as with various offices within the Department of Education, and with a broad swath of community based organizations.

We also run print advertising campaigns. Some of you may have already come into contact with our current campaign now running across the MTA. The campaign highlights ASAP program benefits and runs

parallel to a University campaign, further highlighting CUNY's affordability.

As a student accepts their offer of admission to one of our CUNY ASAP partner colleges, they are then actively engaged by our local college based recruitment staff. College recruitment efforts are also supported by our ASAP Ambassador Program, with is a program-wide student leadership development experience that adds capacity to the college's recruitment efforts.

ASAP sets ambitious enrollment targets each year, and broadly recruits new students as they are admitted to CUNY partner colleges, or we recruit currently enrolled or continuing students who meet the program's eligibility criteria. Students are recruited in both the fall and spring, until each college reaches their full enrollment capacity.

To be ASAP eligible, students must be eligible for New York City resident tuition -- at our community colleges -- or New York State resident tuition at our comprehensive colleges; agree to study full-time in an ASAP approved associate major. By full-time study, we mean a minimum of 12 credits a semester, preferably 15, and a few majors that have

degree pathways that prohibit completion in three years, are excluded from eligibility; students must have completed the FAFSA or TAP application; students must apply for financial aid each year and accept any need based grant aid offered; and finally if a continuing or transfer student, they must have no more than 21 college credits and a minimum GPA of a 2.0.

ASAP has met and exceeded our expansion goals in academic year 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, serving approximately 25,500 students both years. Due to the disruptions of the pandemic and compounded by the enrollment challenges across both CUNY and community colleges nationwide, ASAP has seen modest declines in enrollment over the past three academic years.

This year, the program has supported 20,309 unique students -- 10,7592 students were recruited across both this last fall and spring.

All ASAP programs are actively recruiting for the coming fall, and we fully intend to hit our enrollment target of 25,000 students in this coming academic year. This requires ASAP to recruit 14,000 new students, which based on our analysis means we

need to successfully recruit 60 percent of the eligible population.

To further elaborate on the way that the program is operationalized locally, I will turn now to my college, Dr. Carey Manifold.

DEAN MANIFOLD: Thank you, Christine. Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

My name is Carey Manifold, and I am Interim Assistant Dean for Academic Advisement At Kingsborough Community College. I joined the Kingsborough team when the ASAP Program launched in 2007 as an Academic Advisor. And since, then I've held roles as a ASAP Associate Director and Director. Having spent in 15 years working in higher education, I am passionate about the community colleges mission, its commitment to diversity, and how it provides opportunity lifelong learning opportunities for underserved populations.

In my role as Interim Assistant Dean for Advisement, I oversee college-wide academic advisement, transfer services, and student support services. I also manage several student success programs and departments, including the ASAP Program,

CUNY Start/Math Start, transfer services, and the college advisement academies. Our Advisement Academy is a major discipline-based program that allows students to explore different majors while they are making a decision while working with an academic advisor to make informed decisions as they are deciding that to do next. All of this work allows me to contribute to student retention, student success, and graduation for all Kingsborough students.

Since joining the ASAP Program, have seen it grow to serve over 2000 students each year providing comprehensive financial and academic support -- from 247 when the program first launched back in 2007.

Throughout all of that the team has remained committed to providing services to the "whole" student. And by that I mean, we are looking at all of the financial challenges, academic challenges, any responsibilities that a student might have outside of the classroom that could impact how they perform academically. And our academic advisors are committed to helping students overcome those burdens and make sure that they are on track to graduation.

As the ASAP Program grew, we have grown to represent a significant percentage of the college

student population. Between 2015 and 2019, the ASAP Program... our program and Kingsborough, we represent... We grew from representing 15 percent of our first-time freshman students to now representing 35 percent. The program has continued to grow and support even more students to graduation. Kingsborough ASAP students' three-year graduation rate during our expansion period was on average 22 percent higher than the college non-ASAP supported student graduation rates.

Understanding students and building sustained relationships with them is the foundation of the ASAP model. It is what has helped our team to continue to help our students to achieve their goals.

In my current role, I have been focused on implementing an academic advisement model that offers consistent advisement to all students regardless of which advertisement program they are being supported by.

Until recently at Kingsborough, only our first-semester students were required to receive academic advisement to decide their program of study and to select courses. In the past year, I have worked to implement ASAP best practices in providing

individualized, timely, comprehensive academic support for our students, all underpinned by real-time student level data to support engagement, retention and graduation.

One critical tool that ensures that student level, real time data is at the center of our advisement practice is our Starfish early alert system. Starfish collects data from our student management system, facilities, staff, and it allows us to intervene if a student needs assistance. It connects our students to a network of facility advisors and student support staff, and it allows students to communicate with that network if they need any support. It also allows our faculty members to alert advisors if a student is having difficulty in a class, so that we can intervene in a timely manner.

Knowing when a student is having difficulty in a class is key, because the advisors can intervene very quickly to be able to help students to continue to stay on track.

Starfish supports all areas of our college advisement by seamlessly connecting our faculty to our advisor and vice versa.

I have served as the functional lead for Starfish for Kingsborough since its implementation in 2019, and over that time I have seen the college advisement community come closer to developing a student advisement model that values and highlights all aspects of the student experience inside and outside of the classroom -- the central tenet of the ASAP Program, ,you know, paying attention to what is happening to the student, not just when they are in the classroom, but what is happening outside.

Additionally, we have incorporated several ASAP-like comprehensive support services across the colleges' general advertisement, from introducing students to tutoring early to introducing early career planning and transfer planning, and also promoting access to a financial aid counselor early so that students can navigate any of those challenges.

Tracking and documenting advisor/advisee engagement has been a cornerstone of the ASAP model. And introducing technology to look larger Kingsborough community to appropriately connect with students has been key to providing timely support to all students.

At Kingsborough, we are committed to drawing on the best practices of ASAP to promote a cultural shift and not only advisement practices, but also in our expectations about time to graduation -- through data, relationship building, and adoptable technology, we are confident that all advising areas at Kingsborough can improve the student experience and outcomes such as engagement, retention, and graduation.

That concludes my testimony. Thank you so much for your time. And we look forward to your questions.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your testimony.

I want to announce that we have been joined by Council Member Gale Brewer, the one, the only.

I am hoping you can clarify something for me, because I sort of heard both things in the testimony... I mean, I think everyone here agrees that more students should be in ASAP. I heard that we need more funding in order to ensure that ASAP... that we have ASAP for everyone. Uh, I heard about a cap that we... I am not sure of the exact quote, but you recruit students until you meet the cap of full

enrollment capacity. But that you are also recruiting students? I mean, could you talk a little bit more about what the balance is between recruiting students, what your cap actually is at the colleges - or it isn't, if you even turn students away from the program?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Sure, I can speak that.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: So, we establish our enrollment targets based on capacity, and we determine that based on our primary caseload ratio. So, we have a certain allocation for our professional advisement staff to maintain that one to 150 caseload ratio. And as such, every college then will maximize their enrollment to ensure that every advisor does not exceed that caseload ratio of the 150. So, that's essentially how the budget is constructed for each college program. They have an allocation for personal, that caseload ratio is kind of the centerpiece of that. And the enrollment targets are then, uh, year to year, established based on graduation, retention. And as students move out of the program, we refill or back-fill with new students

in those incoming cycles. We recruit both in the fall and in the spring cycle.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And do you have a waiting list? I mean, are students... I mean, it sounds, necessarily, if they have to be turned away from this wonderful program, if you only have capacity for the one to 150 ratio.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: So, in our height of enrollment health, it certainly was first come first serve basis. Students who were enrolled who accepted their offer of admission at our partner college, were recruited actively, were committed to the program, they essentially claimed their spot. So, we did then have a little bit of room then to recruit in that following spring. So, we always ensure that we capture those students who are interested in that following cycle. I think because the enrollment health as of late, we have not had that challenge necessarily. But, again, you know, I think that we are always looking at caseload ration as being the kind of litmus to how much we can support students or the enrollment target per college.

CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Right, though given that this program retains students at college, I would imagine part of your enrollment challenge is that students aren't staying. And if they were enrolled in ASAP, then they might stay at college. Right? We should have ASAP for everyone.

So, you don't... So, this year, you didn't have a waiting list, but in other years you do have waiting lists? And how long are those waiting lists?

DEAN MANIFOLD: It depends on which institution it is. I know at Kingsborough, one of the things that we are able to do is roll our students over to the spring semester. Our waiting lists typically happens at the end of our enrollment period when ,you know, we are closing off registration. So, it's students coming like, after the first day of classes, and at that point it's not the best way to engage students and get them to really get the true benefits of what we are going to be able to provide. So, they are usually moved to either the spring semester or the fall semester. Because typically they are coming outside of our enrollment window.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And regarding the advertisement and outreach, it sounds like you have

both broad advertising and direct outreach. And do you do any work to... or are ,you know, cognizant of if particular groups of people or populations that have historically been left behind or where you try to bridge those gaps? For example, ,you know, Black and Brown college students, uh, Black men, uh, students with disabilities? Do you do specific targeted outreach to them to try to close those achievement gaps?

DEAN MANIFOLD: Yes, this was part of, uh, one of our more recent campaigns with Kingsborough, we were specifically targeting Black and Brown students. So, because one of the things that we saw with our graduation data is that we were able to close some of those achievement gaps for Black and Brown males. So, we were intentionally focused on recruiting more of those students. So, we created a campaign that would allow us to get in to communities where ,you know, minority students lived and encouraged them to connect with our program. Also, when they got in to the program, we created programming to make sure that that stayed -- uh, connecting them with academic advisors that understood ,you know, the challenges that they are going through in terms of being in

college -- helping them to connect with recourses on campus that would help them to work through whatever difficulties they were encountering, so that we could get them to the point of graduation.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I do want to announce that we have been joined by Council Member Oswald Feliz, thank you.

So, in the test... I mean, it is very clear that this program is very successful, it meets all of the benchmarks. And I think it was in one of the testimonies, we were... You were looking at ways to ,you know, increase the success of the program. But, it seems that the success criteria has remained rather constant throughout the year. So, it's ,you know, it has been, uh, 50 percent will graduate within three years.

Has there been discussion in changing the criteria? Maybe a sort a, uh, even a challenge to yourself to say, we are going to get 40 percent in three years, and 10 percent in two years? Or 60 percent in three years? I mean, do you ever change the criteria for those purposes? Up the ante so to speak?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: So, I would say that we are pretty committed to maintaining our 50 percent three-year graduation. As a primary benchmark we know that students benefit from timely degree completion. We know that most of our students will go on to transfer and pursue their baccalaureate degrees. We know that timely degree completion has very positive gains in terms of efficient use of their financial aid resources. So, essentially, I think that we look at our benchmarks and maintain them and strive to achieve them. And we look at them in way wherein we understand the gaps, meaning where we are falling short. And we look at that for the purposes of adjusting our program practices, making sure that we look at that data just disaggregate that data, see how certain subgroups within our population of students are performing comparative to that benchmark data, so that we can be responsive programmatically.

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I just want to add that the answer is that we have been talking about very recently, I actually had a meeting with somebody from MDRC, because we want to make sure that if we change anything that it is a pilot, and we are not

1 necessarily changing it for the program. Because the
2 program has been so successful, that we would not
3 want to make a change without researching first.
4 Which is why I mentioned that if we could pilot, uhm,
5 and talking to MDCR about what that would like.
6 Because we would want to maintain efficacy, but are
7 there things that we could do to capture the other
8 students that are not, uhm, enrolling in the program
9 -- older students. So, we want to tweak it very
10 systematically while ensuring that we continue
11 providing the support and success for students. We
12 would never want to do something, and, then, five
13 years from now, the data indicates that that
14 change...

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right.

17 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: uh, had a negative
18 impact.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I mean, well, the question
20 wasn't... Maybe I didn't, uh, articulate it well,
21 the question really wasn't about changing your model,
22 the question was more about your internal success
23 criteria. It was how do you measure success? And
24 you have been succeeding with the same benchmark
25 for... I mean, since the inception of the program.

1 I mean, there is no doubt. And, so, I think the
2 question is really internally, are you discussing not
3 changing the services that you are providing, not
4 changing the supports you are giving, but really
5 changing internally the rubric, the rubric for
6 success much as we do in the classroom? Right, if a
7 student is starting to achieve ,you know, you make it
8 a little... either make it a little more challenging
9 for them or up the ante for them, so that they can
10 achieve more, which is what I think we are trying to
11 do with the program. So, it was really more about
12 internal benchmarks, not changing the program.

14 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I think that if we did
15 that, we would still do it as a pilot. Just to make
16 sure that... We want to analyze what exactly it
17 would take if we want to change a benchmark to
18 something higher per se. Uh, we want to pilot it,
19 because it would ... It might potentially require
20 that we change some type of the service. And so that
21 is the conversation I am having. We have some
22 promising conversations, uh, with MDRC about that.
23 But, I don't think we would change it across the
24 board.

2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, I mean, I think... I
3 think we all agree, the goal should always be to
4 strive better for our students.

5 So, the... If you... I want to ask just
6 quickly... I'm going back and forth, but about
7 money.

8 Can you repeat how much you would need at the
9 current campuses to provide ASAP for all students?

10 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: It would be an additional
11 \$126,240,546.00 to capture all community college
12 students.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All community... For all
14 of the campuses?

15 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And what about for the ones
17 who are ASAP currently is housed if you expanded
18 let's say Kingsborough, the number of students, just
19 the...

20 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: That's the number. It
21 would be at all of the community colleges. So, right
22 now... What we did to capture that figure, is we
23 took the total enrollment across community colleges
24 where there is ASAP and deducted the \$25,000 and the
25 multiplied that by cost per student.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: What are your hopes for getting that in the State Budget coming up?

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: (LAUGHING) We're optimists.

[LAUGHTER IN CHAMBERS]

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, you have to be optimists!

So, do you... So, during the Preliminary Budget Hearing and during your testimony, you stated that CUNY enjoys cost savings from ASAP, because ,you know, the students graduate more quickly, et cetera, how much does CUNY save? You mentioned how much they save per student. How much do they save total last year because of the timely graduation, how much did CUNY save as a result of this program?

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I do have had it for one particular year.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, you have it for... an average? Or you have it...

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes, I'm looking... I am trying to read through my testimony to find where that sentence was.

I'm sorry, yes, an average of \$6,500 per graduate. And, so, I did not do the math with the total number of graduates.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, over the course of the three years, or two years, maybe? Maybe people graduate in two years? Or three years, it's \$6,500...

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Three years.

CHAIRPERSON POWERS: And... Okay. And, over that time, how many students are there?

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: There are 88,000.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, 88,000... Is that the math?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Sorry That's the total number of students served... (CROSS-TALK)

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Enrolled, not graduated... (CROSS-TALK)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: since the inception of the program. Not necessarily graduated.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. Okay, we'll do the math later. But, I think it is certainly helpful in terms of ,you know, these budgetary questions, in a year, on average, how much money we are actually saving by investing in these programs. I mean, you

do have good... Again, you have good data, and then the year to year numbers are also very helpful.

So, and during the Preliminary Budget Hearing, it was also mentioned that compounded budget cuts of \$15 million have had deep impacts on CUNY programs.

Could you describe how these reductions have affected CUNY's ability to run ASAP? And how has CUNY ensured the quality of this program despite the reductions?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: So, we have had the benefit of keeping our ASAP budget whole over the course of the past few years. Of course, we have been able to realize some substantial savings in the ways of under enrollment and also personal vacancies.

So, our offering were not necessarily diluted, I think there was an interim of time when the shutdown took place where we did pull back on certain student financial recourses, like the MetroCard. We did tailor back or modify down some of the supports, say in the intersession when we knew that there was kind of a lighter take up on those items. But, we certainly never adjusted the program services wholesale. We've made modifications and again we realized savings due to vacancies. Because we were

not maximizing enrollment, whenever adviser vacancies were say to come online, due to transition or what have you, we would not backfill those vacancies, just because, again, we are trying to maximize that caseload ratio of 150. So, I would say that ,you know, we, again, we were able to realize some savings, because of under enrollment essentially.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And, recognizing that the State Budget has not passed, ,you know, but the City Budget, certainly The Mayor's proposed those PEGS, do you anticipate having to cut back on this program?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: So, in terms of anticipation, I think that we always keep in mind ways that we can maximize efficiencies. So, again, that looks... We always try to stay away from reducing student supports, financial resources, uhm, and those financial supports that the program offers. There are ways to make slight modifications to realize some savings. There are other personal choices we can make in terms of pulling back say in our parttime staffing allocations. So, I think we have prepared some scenarios where we could modify our operational budget in the event of a budget cut.

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I would say that are planning for the enrollment of 25,000 students and actively recruiting under the assumption that we would receive full funding. But we are well aware that if there were to be a cut, some services might have to change. But, we are cautiously optimistic that be the case in

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, I mean, for a program that helps students graduate and then saves money and produces economic output, I would hate to see a program like this cut. I would love to see expanded.

And just one tiny thing on that... on the MetroCards, I think I mentioned this at the Preliminary Budget, but ,you know, have New York City Fair Fares. Is that something... Are you bearing the costs of MetroCards, or are your counselors helping eligible students enroll in Fair Fares and sort of offsetting some of the costs of the ASAP program?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Right, we do shoulder the full cost per student of MetroCard benefits. These are semester based unlimited cards that we provide to our students that have a value range of just over \$1,000 per student, per year. So,

we do not kind of cross share with Fair Fares necessarily.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Why? I mean, it is a City program. The City pays for it. Why wouldn't the counselors in the ASAP Program help students apply for the benefits available from the government, much like it sounds like they do with SNAP and housing benefits, why wouldn't they do the same with MetroCards?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Uh, you can speak to that more on, like, the operational complexities of why that is.

DEAN MANIFOLD: So, some of these benefits, it takes a while for students to become eligible for it, and for them to actually get it in hand and start using it versus ,you know, the ASAP benefit, which is available to them the first day of classes. Many of our students cannot make it to campus if we do not give them this MetroCard on their first day. They make that very clear to us when they come for like, an engagement event of something along those lines. They don't have any means of getting back home. So, one of the things that ,you know, the ASAP benefit does, it makes this MetroCard benefit readily

1 available to students. Not to say that ,you know, we
2 don't want to engage in helping students to apply for
3 this benefit, but there is a delay in terms of them
4 actually getting access to it and getting it in their
5 hands. And we don't actually get our students in
6 front of us until ,you know, they're actually on
7 campus and ready to take classes.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, I mean, I would
10 imagine that if a student is with the ASAP Program
11 for three years, that perhaps for the first period of
12 time, I think that is great getting those MetroCards
13 right in their hand right away, but I also imagine it
14 would an incredible cost savings for your program
15 where you can perhaps have more students, to provide
16 more robust programming if you utilize all of the
17 services. And I think in our budget response, we
18 actually tried to increase eligibility for the Fair
19 Fares Program, which means perhaps more students
20 would be eligible for the Fair Fares Program. I
21 would highly encourage you all and anyone who touches
22 ASAP, to utilize all of the programming. And we
23 fight very hard in the City for these programs like
24 Fair Fares. And it would be an incredible

opportunity for our students and for the ASAP Program, if they took full advantage of them.

I want to turn over now to Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I have to say, I was here when it started with John, and it is a great program. So, we need to not only fund it, but obviously we would love to have more funding.

So, my question is, I know you said 50 percent graduate in three years. And I know that you are still working to see, in a careful evaluation, if there is something more there that could be done. But I am wondering, because it is such a robust program, are there pieces that could... that you think could enhance it that would get more people to participate in and graduate so you moved it up to 60 or 70 percent. I am don't... I am asking, because I don't know.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: So, I think we look carefully at kind of the proportion of students we serve relative to the CUNY population. So, as was noted in the testimony, we support about 42 percent of the fulltime Associate Degree-Seeking population across CUNY. We do a final analysis looking back at

past falls. This past fall we recognized that 36 percent of that Associate Degree-Seeking population were enrolled full time... I'm sorry, parttime. Thereby, they were not eligible for the program. We also know that about 12 percent of those students were in majors that we do not currently support within ASAP. So, again, we are always looking these areas of opportunity, I think it ADC Alvero's testimony, this note of how we can do more, looking at other populations of students, and applying the model within those populations is an area for growth.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, the 50 percent who don't get through in three years, do they get through in five years, or what is the number that they get... Is there any number that they get through in? I know some who are not in ASAP, because they get through in 10 or 20 years or something.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: That's true.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But, what is the number or do you have any average for those are not in that 50 percent cohort?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: And in terms of where we see retention drop off of those students?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: I mean, I think that we know ,you know, based on historical analysis, that first to second semester retention is where the cliff is. I think that many students... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Second semester? Okay.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Yes, first to second semester -- retention. That's where students start, uh, and then might have to drop back to parttime enrollment, might have to make other choices in terms of entering the workforce. So, I know that there is this kind of criticalness of that first semester for our new students in the ways in which they are able to engage in the program and build that relationship with their academic advisor... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Go to high school and talk about this great program? Is that what you do in particular...

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Maybe targeting high schools where it will... (CROSS-TALK)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Male, uh, et cetera.
You... That's what you do?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Certainly. Well,
we do know that 70 percent of our incoming population
of ASAP students are first-time freshman flowing in
from our Department of Education... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But, a lot of women, love
women, but then a lot you know [INAUDIBLE]...

(CROSS-TALK)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: We can definitely
do that...

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We need more men.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know I am not supposed
to say that, but... uh, the other question I have is,
just in terms of evaluation, because it is so
important, what criteria does... It's a Man Power
that does it? When you said MDR... I don't know...

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: So, MDRC and
conducted our most righteous evaluation and...

(CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay...

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: in RCT, which...

(CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And that's Man Power Development, whatever... What is it called, what does it stand for? I can never remember, MDRC?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Oh, it was a development corporation. I cannot remember the acronym, I'm sorry, but, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I think it's Man Power. Anyway, long story short, what criteria did they look at? Is it just graduation? What are they looking at when they are doing the evaluation? Do you... How do you have a sense?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: So. MDRC's RCT evaluation looked at the full kind of trajectory in terms of semester to semester retention, credits attempted and earned, again, progress towards degree and ultimately two, two and a half, and three year graduation. We conduct that analysis inhouse, though with a less rigorously constructed comparison group. As we have served more continuing and transfer students within the program, having that matched comparison group of students have become a little bit more administratively challenging on that ,you know, for our quasi experimental design that we conduct inhouse on our team. But, we look at the same

features in terms of the academic progress that semester to semester retention, credits accumulated, and, of course engagement... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Do all candidates... I should know this, I know BMCC has childcare, do all campuses have childcare? And if they don't, is that something that this program pays for?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: So, LaGuardia and BMCC are two programs that have a specific relationship with their childcare centers wherein we have kind of a prioritization in the way in which our students can access those supports. In terms of capacity across other... I know that is an area of need, and capacity... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's why I'm asking, it helps to get through...

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Exactly, exactly... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, that... It's not part of the program? At Kingsborough do you have... (CROSS-TALK)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: It is not necessarily part of the program... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, in other words, if I

have a child who is childcare age, and I want to go Kingsborough, I'd have to find my own childcare? Is that what you are saying?

DEAN MANIFOLD: Well, you can apply for the childcare at the campus, but it is on a first come first serve basis, because they only have a limited capacity [TIMER CHIMES]... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But, it is not... ASAP doesn't get priority?

DEAN MANIFOLD: No.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. All right.

And, then, my final question is, I heard this very large number for being across the board, but I would love to see it... I would like to see the libraries open all of the time, et cetera, et cetera. What do you... I mean, I guess what I am saying is, my suggestion would be to try to keep these evaluations as public as possible, because they are excellent. Because I do think you should be aiming for the money to do it across the board. I guess Good... Is Guttman the only... I know, I was there when that was founded. I was there when everything was founded. What does... Does... Is Guttman the only community college that is not in the program?

DEAN MANIFOLD: Correct, that is correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, because they do have childcare.

DEAN MANIFOLD: Mm-hmm

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's why I was asking, too. All right, and that is the only one that is not in the program?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Correct. All of our associate degree institutions operate ASAP with the exception of Guttman.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, all right.

So, do you think there is enough evaluation material to do more publicity about it? And do you get some private grants based on good evaluations? That is my other question.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Hmm, yes, I see your point. And in terms of making our well-known evidence based more public, I think a lot of local, state, and federal policy makers do some of that work for us... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: To hell with the local, state policy makers. I am talking about like, big foundations as well as... But, you don't go for private grants? You do not?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: So, we do supplement our work with some private funding. Well, for ACE, which is not part of this hearing, but of course that was... has been mobilized through the support of philanthropy. We raise funding for our national replication work, uh, meaning that we support other institutions and state systems to replicate the model with a high level of fidelity. That also has been studied by NDRC in terms of applying a rigorous evaluation to ensure that this model... Again, when implementing with a high level fidelity... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Do you have intellectual property money for doing the replication?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: I'm sorry, say that again?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Do you have intellectual property money for doing the replication? I'm serious.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: We operate on a fee for service model, which directly feeds the staff who then support the provision of technical assistance. So, we do not license our materials in

such a way. It is more of kind of a service in the spirit of advancing completion across the country.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You should think that way.

[LAUGHTER IN CHAMBERS]

All right, thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do think some of the big foundations, you should be approaching. You're not? You're not going to Robinhood? You're not going to Ford?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Well, Robinhood supports our ACE work primarily. And I would say we also, again, receive support, uh, more recently from Morgan Stanley Foundation, which supplements our career development within CUNY ASAP. So, they support us to sponsor events and do things that otherwise tax levied funds make it more difficult to do.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And, I don't know if this was answered, but how much private funding do you get?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: For ASAP?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: For ASAP, yes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: So, in this past fiscal year, uhm, just for ASAP, excluding ACE, I

would say somewhere in the realm of \$3 million, this last fiscal year.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And do you have, I mean, do have grant writers and people whose job it is to ,you know, try to get money?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: I'm sorry, say that again?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And do you have people whose job it is, grant writers, things of that nature...

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Oh, no, I... No, I would say I do most of the grant writing.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: \$3 million, that's a pretty good job. I imagine there are ,you know, private organizations out there who want to invest of the success of our students and, quite frankly, create a pool of applicants for their own organizations and their own businesses. And has that ever been discussed about what kind of work is done for private fund raising? Or has most of the work been trying to create and uplift this program with all public funds?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Yes, I would say that we utilize the public fund lines to support...

Well, let me put this in broader perspective. Of our

total City funded budget, 95 percent is deployed out to our colleges who implement the program. Five percent is retained, I would say as overhead to support our Central Office staff -- a small carve out, I guess, proportionately. So, yes, we try to ensure that this money flows directly to support implementation as a primary focus. Does that answer your question?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Gale, go ahead?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: This is the program in New York? You have got to publicize this. You have got to tell more people more about it and its success. I am just saying, I have... (CROSS-TALK)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Yes, I appreciate that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And I do think in our society as the Chair was saying, where the businesses are desperate for your wonderful students, you know, it has to have more presence in our city. Suggestion.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRONGNIART: Okay, thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Get John out of retirement and get him talking. Thank you.

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I would just add, in my meeting with MDRC, they said the same exact thing. And last week, they sent me a list of funders. So, yes, great minds...

[LAUGHTER IN CHAMBERS]

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Call them up. They just need to be asked. They could throw around a million dollars here and there. But, these are real dollars that can help a lot of... expand the donation to the campuses. And, in your discussions about funding, whether it is public or private, are you discussing expanding this program to more of your colleges? Or is the goal really to ensure that more students, at the colleges where it already exists, have the opportunity for this program?

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: So, this program is specially targeted associate degree students. And so it is at all the colleges that offer an associate degree -- other than Guttman, Guttman is the one that is a very tiny community college and they're advisement system is modeled... It has a lot of the components of ASAP already. So, only some of our four years are comprehensive, which means they offer

associate degrees, but our senior colleges don't offer associate degrees.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, there is no school that offers an associate degree that does not have ASAP?

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Correct. Other than Guttman, Guttman... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uh, for Guttman...

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, we don't talk about Guttman.

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: That's right, yep.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. Okay, give me one moment, please.

That is it for my questioning. I want to thank all of you for coming and for your testimony today about an incredible program. And it is something that we absolutely need to invest more in. And there are certainly steps that CUNY can take to make this program more successful and more cost efficient, including utilizing our Fair Fares system here in New York, and reaching out to the private donors who can really do some the financial work to really expand this program to more students who really it here in New York City. Thank you.

And in a moment I will be calling up the next panel.

I am going to call up the next panel, and if I mispronounce your name, first, I apologize, and I would just ask that you correct me.

I would like for Penny Lewis, Berkis Cruz-Eusebio, and Matthew Ahrens to please come up.

Thank you, you do not need to be sworn in, but, again, please state your name for the record, and of course correct me if I mispronounced any of your names.

And can we start with Berkis Cruz-Eusebio?

BERKIS CRUZ-EUSEBIO: Yes, you pronounced it well. I am Berkis Cruz-Eusebio, good afternoon.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. You can begin with your testimony.

BERKIS CRUZ-EUSEBIO: Well, good afternoon. I am Berkis Cruz-Eusebio, I am with Hostos Community College, I am an ASAP staff member.

So, I have a hybrid role here, because I am also a PSC member. And I am here, because want to not justify the existence of the ASAP Program, but to really reassure you that through my 16 years at ASAP

as well, I have seen how well this program works -- including in for one of my children.

I have to correct my testimony, because I am not the only one in ASAP that has been here for 16 years. Dr. Manifold has been here, too. But, I am the only Career Specialist that has been in ASAP through the 16 years. So, I have seen this program grow from when my caseload was a 100 students increasing to 900-and something.

ASAP is a program that has proven to be effective. It has been replicated in one county and six other states. I am part of the ASAP replication expert team that helps impart of the Career Specialist role.

And I feel like we are the glue that really will help ASAP really expand in the sense that we prepare our students to be competent to be able to obtain gainful employment, to conduct themselves, and to be able to use their critical thinking and able to use their skills in situations that some of them have already have mastered through their life experiences alone.

I am sure that you have heard that we service the poorest students in the nation, that our students

1 don't come prepared to college, that they have a ton
2 of barriers including the childcare; however, I
3 believe that they are entitled to an education just
4 like any other person who comes from a richer family.
5 Education, in my view, should not be seen as a
6 privilege. And the cost of supporting programs like
7 ASAP should be seen as an investment, because ASAP
8 services 25,000 students that I have helped... work
9 with, and continue to, in collaboration with all of
10 the other components of ASAP. When I think about it
11 in my very simplistic approach, which everybody knows
12 me by, I wonder if these are 25,000 potential tax
13 payers, not benefit dependent citizens. And that is
14 what, in my view, ASAP really offers to our students.
15 The possibility to break out from the poverty cycle,
16 and to be able possibly be the first one in their
17 family to ever be in college and complete a degree.
18 Which is the important part also. ASAP is the
19 motivational program the offers the opportunity for
20 them to shine, to be part of something positive for
21 change in this city -- something that works, that
22 offers them reliable support and loyalty as... You
23 are in ASAP, and once you are in ASAP, you are always
24 in ASAP. And they know that at least Hostos my motto
25

with them is always, when things go wrong in the world, come back home. Come and reach out to one of us. We offer services that typically will not be offered to the general population in at community colleges, [TIMER CHIMES] because they don't have the funding that is required. But, we see the results in them. For instance, I have a very dear person that came to me as a non-English speaking, recent immigrant, who was working in bakery burning her hands. She didn't speak English, she was receiving benefits, and she came to work voluntarily through the benefits program. After multiple failures in certain tests at CUNY that were in the past, she passed and became part of ASAP. We helped her by giving her a parttime position through the work study program, and then she became a college assistant through increased funding, we were able to get somebody to work one on one with me. Well, this young lady really excelled, her name was is [INAUDIBLE] and I believe you have some written testimony from her. And she became my right hand, my left hand, and my brain as a college assistant in my area. I am very proud to say that she accomplished her associate's degree with a 3.8 GPA, and completed

her... In 2019, she completed her bachelor's degree. She is now a full-time staff member who is in the process of owning her house... In a matter of six years.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Wow, GPA's better than mine I think... (CROSS-TALK)

BERKIS CRUZ-EUSEBIO: That's what I call upper mobility. Huh?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I said, her GPA's better than mine. I should have done ASAP.

BERKIS CRUZ-EUSEBIO: And that is only one story. And I am bringing hers, because you will see her written testimony. I am not sure if she is going to be able to testify online. My... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We will be sure to read the testimony. I want to make sure our other witnesses have an opportunity to speak. So, I would like to hear Dr. Lewis next, please.

DR. PENNY LEWIS: Thank you, Berkis.

Good afternoon, nice to see you, thank for having this hearing. I am Penny Lewis, Secretary of the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY and a faculty member at the School of Labor and Urban Studies, and I also used to teach at Borough of Manhattan Community

College, and I was there actually when the ASAP Program was first introduced. So, I also know first-hand about the success of the program.

I am here really speaking on behalf of the union, first thanking the Council for its strong support of CUNY in its response to the cuts that are being threatened by the Mayor's budget. And we have a long way to go before the budget is adopted, and our union will be fighting all the way through to get the funding that it needs.

And we are here specially because of the funding that ASAP desperately needs and deserves. As you know it is a nationally recognized program. We have heard a lot of about its fantastic strengths today and why people have sought to emulate it across the country and its incredible success rates that we have heard about today -- the double the graduation rate. And we heard a little bit about the analysis that shows that the graduation gaps for Black and Hispanic males ,you know, are reduced, et cetera. Really fantastic statistics.

And, Chair Dinowitz, you have asked why everything cannot be ASAP, and we feel exactly the same way. Every single CUNY student should have the

comprehensive wrap around support services that ASAP provides. And...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: They should just call it college!

DR. PENNY LEWIS: But, we know and we have heard, it requires much more investment in order for that to be the case, which is why we fight constantly for more money and full funding for CUNY. Because we cannot realize ASAP for all until we have the money that we need.

So, you are hearing from colleagues and students today. But, I would like to just highlight to areas quickly.

We have already heard that this is an investment. We know that CUNY students give back \$4.2 billion in state taxes yearly. So, every penny that goes to CUNY students comes back to New York. And ASAP is proof that full funding is key to students' success. The high retention and completion rates of the ASAP program are due in large part to the recourse that they devote to advisement. So, the \$35.5 million in the Council's budget response, will help ASAP and programs like it to expand by hiring 264 additional advisors. And we need advisors everywhere,

obviously, but because so many ASAP students are in the first generation of their families to attend college, advisors are essential in helping students navigate our large university system.

And I would just stress [TIMER CHIMES] if I can just take a little... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Take a little bit, yeah...

DR. PENNY LEWIS: bit more? Uh, that the... You all were speaking about the private funding, and ,you know, I appreciate and agree that ASAP is phenomenal and deserves funding from every stream. However, it is essential that this funding be public. It is a public good. It needs to be accountable to our city, to our tax payers, and to our students -- not to boards of foundations and programs like that.

And these cuts that are being proposed are completely self-defeating. CUNY testified to the fact that they were able to absorb the cuts through savings, but it was not mentioned that there was a hiring freeze, and a lot of the vacancies that were able to provide savings were there because of a hiring freeze. And it has meant that the caseloads for our advisors have skyrocketed, included the

advisors ,you know, who serve inside of the ASAP Program in career counseling and things like that.

So, additional cuts cannot be tolerated, and we really appreciate the support that the council is showing to ASAP and CUNY as a whole.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Absolutely. In fact, in our Council's Preliminary Budget response, we did respond by saying that we need more investment in advisors. That they are critical to student achievement and success both in the classroom and outside the classroom. This is a council that is fully aligned with those values.

And, last we have Matthew Ahrens.

MATTHEW AHRENS: Yes, so, I am go to City Tech, and I am also ASAP student. And it's been such a blessing to be in that program. Between the advisors and just everyone there, it has been such a whole blessing coming out of COVID and knowing what I want to do. I believe that, as you said, every student should have the chance to be in the ASAP Program, because it can help so many people in the future -- with the MetroCards, the advisors, with their courses, because I even was one to say, what should I take and what should I not take? And it has just

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. I always forget to mention this, I don't know why. I was a CUNY student. I got my graduate degree at Hunter. And I was in a program, and we had this benefit of having an advisor who says, you need to take these classes, make sure you take these classes, these are the times they are available. And they really guided us through. I am sure I would not have completed grad school if not for the advisor.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And ,you know, it is sort of silly, we have advisement in our careers and in our jobs. I cannot tell you how much I have gotten for pension consultations, and here are your health benefits and enroll in this retirement plan. We get

these sorts of things. And as a teacher I got outreach from the UFT and DOE about salary steps and about professional development. There is no reason why every single student -- who is going to eventually go into a career -- shouldn't get the exact same supports.

Matt, how did you find out about the ASAP Program?

MATTHEW AHRENS: I saw both on the train and then also during my orientation. And now the... I will be honest, like the grab they had was the whole idea of the free MetroCards, because it is the best to save \$2.75 going both ways to school and back. But, then, also the idea that I can have someone help choose career in the future.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You should have seen Alicia smile behind you. That's, the, oh, we are doing the advertisement right, we are doing the recruitment right.

It is there... And I am going to ask this of all of you, we know that ASAP is a great program, but we are always striving to make it better.

If there were one thing about ASAP that you can change or that you can make better, what would it be?

MATTHEW AHRENS: I think I will just have to say if I know it would probably be not possible, but I think the best would be that is if every student, regardless of their backgrounds, if they could have the chance to be in the ASAP Program. Because, also with the tuition assistance, not every student has the best background with their housing or economics.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Matthew.

BERKIS CRUZ-EUSEBIO: If there is one thing that I would change about ASAP, it would definitely be the number of students that we service. I would like to see that higher. As hard working as I am, and as big as the caseloads are, to be able to really offer the program to every college student, because they all deserve the chance.

DR. PENNY LEWIS: Yes, we are all going to say the same thing. I mean, when I was at... When I was at BMCC, I will say we had... All of us who were not in the ASAP Program, and at that time, and I don't know if this is still the case, there were cohorts. Like, the students who were in ASAPs were always traveling with a cohort. And the idea was you got to know the students inside of your cohort. And we were somewhat jealous and resentful of that fact that not every

1 student got that. You know, so we were, like, good
2 for ASAP, but look at ASAP with their special office,
3 and they have advisors, and everybody there has
4 MetroCards. Why doesn't everybody get that? You
5 know, like, what's going on here, why the special
6 program. And what I am very impressed by is the
7 extent to which the success of ASAP, by proving
8 themselves, has meant that it has expanded and been
9 reproduced. But, it is time for every CUNY student
10 to have those same supports. It is just time for it.
11 And ,you know, we have had it; it's been successful
12 for 15 years, and it should not be limited to 25,000
13 students. Every single student in CUNY should have
14 this kind of support, and we will see the graduation
15 rates, and we will see the successes that we see from
16 ASAP. And we will see our enrollment go up, because
17 they know they are going to get much more support in
18 Higher Ed. So, those are my thoughts.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, college, that's how
21 it should be.

22 And, lastly, I will ask the ,you know, for the
23 professionals doing the work in ASAP, do you feel
24 that you are getting the training that is necessary
25 and the supports you need from ,you know,

Administration or Central, to actually do this crucial work that you are doing?

BERKIS CRUZ-EUSEBIO: Absolutely, because it is not possible to service so many students successfully without working as part of a team or in collaboration. So, the program has more from the one on one focus, at least for career specialists, to a more collaborative model. Working hand in hand with advisors, collaborating with other campus resources, we try to approach the students a whole, so that if I, as a career specialist, cannot provide financial support to a student that is experiencing an issue with housing, then we can link up to the, uh, other departments. And because we build those collaboration, then they can pick up from where we cannot help the student. So, Central Office offers us a lot of training and opportunities for growth within your career interest. And they are constantly evolving and bringing innovation to our approach. Like, having to switch from a 101 inclusive program into a more collaborative way of working with the students with appreciative advisement, using chaos theory in terms of understanding everything the

students face. So, in that area, I have no complaints. We have training galore.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We do hearings all the time, whether it is for Higher Education, Oversight, a host of other, uh, Civil Service and Labor, and we hear from Administration, then we hear ,you know, the agency, and they say, this is the best thing we do. And, then, you hear from the people doing the work or the people who are impacted by the work, and the Administration has no idea what's going on. We often hear that. And it is such a pleasure not only to hear that this program is doing incredible work, but that every single person, both those doing the work centrally, people on the ground directly helping students, and the students receiving the services are all saying the exact same thing. That this program is incredible; it is helpful to me; it is helpful to the very people we got in the job to help. And, I couldn't agree with the Administrative or with all of you more, that this is something that needs more investment, because of the human benefits of it. And was mentioned multiple times, the financial investment, this is in the best interest of all of us, of our families, and of New York City as a whole.

BERKIS CRUZ-EUSEBIO: Yes.

[LAUGHTER IN CHAMBERS]

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I want to thank you all for your time and your testimony. And I will call up the next panel, which is on Zoom.

We have a Ms. James on Zoom, a Ms. Achi, and Ms. Barnes-Balenciaga.

And we will start with Heather.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

HEATHER JAMES: Good afternoon, Council Member Dinowitz, how are you? It is very nice to see you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Nice to see you as well.

HEATHER JAMES: I won't be duplicative here, since so many have said what I want to say. But, I just really want to thank you for holding this hearing at this critical time. Because, you know, the City plays an outsized role in funding the community colleges. And as the budget comes up, we really need to focus on funding the community colleges' most successful programs, and doing the best that we can for them. I am, of course, an active PSC member (Professional Staff Congress), but I am also a community college professor, I really see the benefits of ASAP with my own students all of the

time. The advising issue, it could not be more serious, because students do take the wrong classes without an advisor, and they do drop out because of it. Students don't know how to make that connection between career and college without a counselor. And my students will tell me, I'm not coming to class on Thursday, because I get paid on Friday, and I don't have money for a MetroCard, and I don't want to jump the turnstile. I mean, when you work in this environment, it really, it just goes without saying.

So, as a member of the PSC, I helped collect some testimony from ASAP advisors who could not be here today. We did submit some of those testimonies as written testimony, so hopefully you will have them.

But, I just wanted to highlight something that was said to me by one of our advisors. She said that she started working for ASAP, and they were able to provide numerous activities for students including trips, career fairs, ASAP sections of classes were smaller and they had meetings with professors; they had orientations with outside groups, and numerous campus activities to really provide that cohort experience. And some of those things, unfortunately, have had to be rolled back because of budget cuts.

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We all can agree that college is hard, it takes a great toll on our mental, physical and financial skills. College can be a challenging time for any student. Between balancing coursework, extracurricular activities, and jobs. College students have a lot on their plates.

One of the biggest struggles a college student faces is the financial burden. Many students take on debt in order to pay for tuition, room and board, and textbooks. This debt can impact a student's finances well after graduation, making it difficult to establish themselves financially in the years to come. Additionally, the cost of college can make it difficult for students to pursue their passions, as they may be forced to choose a more financially stable career rather than seeking their dream jobs.

Established in 2007 in the City University of New York, the ASAP program provides comprehensive support services to low-income students, intended to help them complete their associate degrees as quickly as possible. The program has been incredibly successful, with students enrolled in the program graduating at a rate more than double the rate of their peers.

I am currently attending LaGuardia College, and I am active in the Asap program. Being a person who recently became a US citizen this program has helped me deeply. I have received a MetroCards, which has helped my commute to school, textbooks, tuition waiver, which has left me debt-free, tutoring on all subjects, which has helped me in keeping up in class & understanding materials.

When I started at LaGuardia I was undecided, but with academic counseling I met my assigned advisor, who advises me on what classes are best for my major, and talks about any issues I have for the day, and helped to choose the right career path.

One more thing that I love about the Asap program is that they offer workshops like LinkedIn Workshops, resume, interviews, and even internships. With such benefits, it makes college less stressful and worry-free, and lets me focus on studying and understanding better.

With the ASAP Program, I know what to do, and I know [TIMER CHIMES] some other students who feel the same way. The ASAP Program is... (CROSS-TALK)

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MARY ACHI: extra hand that I didn't know I needed.

One of the most impressive aspects of the ASAP Program is that it is not only helping students complete their degrees, but it is also helping them achieve greater success after graduation. ASAP graduates have gone on to earn higher salaries and achieve higher levels of educational attainment than their peers who did not participate in the program.

In conclusion, the Asap Program is an important initiative that can have a significant impact on the lives of college students. By increasing graduation rates and providing students with the support they need to succeed, the program is helping to ensure that every student has the opportunity to achieve their full potential. So if you are a student, I highly encourage you to consider participating in the Asap program and taking advantage of the resources and support it offers.

Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your testimony.

And last in this panel, we have Jennifer Barnes-Balenciaga.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JENNIFER BARNES-BALENCIAGA: Good afternoon, everyone. Such a pleasure to be here. I am a student currently at BMCC, I am actually in class at this moment, but I felt it was important to make my presence known and also speak about the program.

As a person who was a Peer IMPACT mentor, I have been able to navigate and help other people understand the ASAP Program.

Being a student [LOST AUDIO][INAUDIBLE] class and graduating this spring, uh, 2023, it has been a pleasure to see the other students around the campus get this type of support. And being a woman of trans experience has been especially been wonderful, because I have been able to help other trans individuals get enrolled into school. And these programs are super helpful, especially those below the poverty line.

As we know [LOST AUDIO][INAUDIBLE] I am a student, so it has been my nature to be very concerned about what the next moves are to make sure that there is [INAUDIBLE] within the ability to gain acceptable educational experience within a huge metropolitan city like New York.

So, I wanted to make sure that I took the time to come to this space and to also give my kudos to the entire ASAP team here at BMCC, and at the community colleges across the New York spectrum.

So, thank you so very much.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Jennifer.

I am going to ask the same question of you that I need the previous panel with, and then I am going to ask Heather and Mary the same question.

Besides expanding ASAP to all people, if there was one element of the program that you could change or you can improve upon, what do you think that would be?

JENNIFER BARNES-BALENCIAGA: I think it has been said time and time again from the various panelists and those within the chambers, but honestly, continue the expansion. I heard the question that you posed earlier in my commute, which was about making some of the credentials for gainful entry to the program a little more difficult or a little more challenging. And I would certainly advise against that. As we know the demographics of students within community college specifically are that of which have so much against them daily. I know for myself, I have heard

several times from other people about MetroCards and the ability to gain them. [TIMER CHIMES] It is truly going to be a necessary movement to make everything more accessible and to make sure that the funding is allocated to even more people moving forward, because the gap of economics here, again, in the City is just constantly expanding, and more people are needing to make sure that they can get to the baccalaureate programs from community college as well as be able to successfully complete their associate degree within community college. So, that would be my answer.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Jennifer.

Uh, Mary, Heather, did you want to add to that?

Can you unmute Heather?

HEATHER JAMES: Thank you for unmuting me.

I will add to that from professor hat perspective. A couple of things, I mean, the ratios of one to 150 for advisors were mentioned a lot of time. That is something that the Council also mentioned in their budget response, and their support for additional advisors for everyone across CUNY. I think with the vacancy reductions, sometimes it is hard, because you create a cohort that is one to 150, you set everything up as the ASAP folks said, but

1 then if people leave in the middle, you have to kind
2 of like reshuffle things around, but you can't fill
3 the vacancies. So, I think in this environment we
4 just need to be mindful of possible staffing issues.
5 And, I think ,you know, just listing for my students,
6 if there is a way to expand the program to part
7 timers specifically. I know the three-year
8 graduation goal could make that difficult. I have
9 some part time students who really want to be
10 fulltime, but they can't because of their housing
11 benefits, or they can't because of the job situation
12 that they have. But they do still have a need for
13 all of the services that ASAP provides, and that
14 could be one way to expand with that immediately
15 moving to ASAP for all. And I think to be able to
16 bring back some of those extracurriculars and those
17 trips, that would really help solidify the cohort
18 model and give people more of an introduction to the
19 college experience. That would be very helpful as
20 well.
21

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you... Thank you.

23 I don't know if Mary is still on? And, if she
24 is, if she would like to add anything that she would
25 improve upon the program?

MARY ACHI: Yes, thank you, Heather and Jennifer. I want to add on to what you guys both said, I know that I have some friends, uh, college friends, that know they could not apply for ASAP, because they weren't eligible because of some of the majors or their income. And we both know that New York is expensive and ,you know, might be making more on paper on the IRS, but it is not coming back for college. And that is what happened to me. My parents, they both file together, and when the FAFSA saw that, they were, like, oh, my parents are making a lot of money. But, it is not coming back to me, like, I am not getting the benefit of the money. Because, for one, rent is expensive ,you know, groceries are expensive, just living in New York is expensive. So, I hope that they make more expansions, include more students, more majors so that no one is left out. And ,you know, in general, college is hard [LOST AUDIO][INAUDIBLE] if we just make sure that everyone is included and everyone can achieve success in the end, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

That wraps up this panel. If we inadvertently... Well, we have heard from everyone who has signed up

to testify. And if we inadvertently missed anyone who would like to testify virtually, please use the Zoom Raise Hand Function, and I will call on you in the order you have raised your hand.

Seeing no one else who wishes to testify today, I would like to note that written testimony, which will be reviewed in full by committee staff, may be submitted to the record for up to 72 hours after the close of this hearing by emailing it to testimony@council.nyc.gov.

I would like to thank CUNY and everyone who participated in today's hearing about ASAP. It is clearly an incredible program where the data supports it, the finances support it, and the people doing the work and receiving the benefits support this program, which really provides the supports to our students to help them succeed, the supports that every single student deserves. And I think it is fitting to say that we should continue to push for this program, the program that really just provides the wrap around support for all students, until we are able to just call ASAP "college".

And with that, I close out this hearing.

[GAVELING OUT] [GAVEL SOUND]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date April 30, 2023