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UNINTENDED IMPACTS: Fewer Black and Latino Freshmen at CUNY Senior Colleges After the Recession

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UNINTENDED IMPACTS: Fewer Black and Latino Freshmen at CUNY Senior Colleges After the Recession

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Executive Summary

Sharp recessions have historically led to a marked increase in applications to the nation's public colleges, as young people seek alternatives to weak labor markets and more expensive private schools. The Community Service Society (CSS) undertook this study to determine the impact of the recent deep recession and continuing jobs crisis on freshman enrollment trends at City University of New York (CUNY), the largest institution of higher education in New York City, and one of the largest public university systems in the country. We were particularly interested in learning how increased competition for admissions may have had an unintended impact on access to college for various sub-groups of CUNY students. In this document, we analyze trends in the demographic characteristics and test scores of incoming freshmen to identify changes in the makeup of various schools within the CUNY system. We are grateful to CUNY for providing us with data for this project.¹

This Report

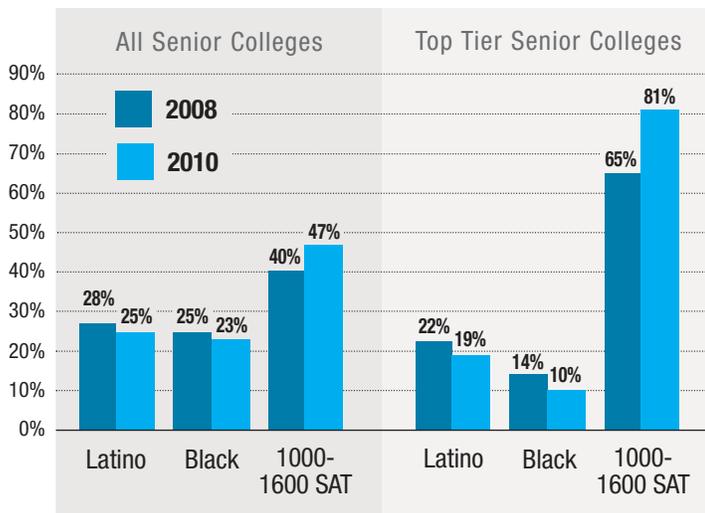
Beginning with an examination of trends in college enrollment across the nation and in New York City over the past ten years, we seek to understand these issues as they relate to demographic shifts, as well as changes in the labor market that are related to the decision to attend college. We then examine freshman enrollment data provided by CUNY, using the first-time freshman classes of 2001, 2008, and 2010 as our three main points of comparison. The period of 2001 to 2008

provides a medium-term view of enrollment trends at CUNY, marked by a general expansion that was, for the most part, enjoyed by students across racial and ethnic groups. We then look at the years of 2009 and 2010, during which New York City (along with the rest of the country) experienced a deep recession that had some of its strongest impacts on the employment of young people. Locally, applications to CUNY surged during the recession, as is generally the case at public colleges during weak labor markets. At the same time, CUNY's senior colleges raised their minimum admissions requirements. Our report looks at the resulting changes in the freshmen who enrolled at CUNY after the recession began. This report restricts its analysis to freshmen, so as to understand the opportunities available to graduating high school students seeking to enroll in CUNY. We intentionally chose not to include an analysis of transfer students, who cannot be easily compared to freshmen. Transfers to CUNY senior colleges come from public and private schools, began college initially at different times, and have already experienced a level of success in college. However, an analysis of enrollment including transfer students shows very similar patterns to those described in this report.

Key Findings

- Enrollment increased from 2001 to 2008, but largely reflected demographic changes in New York City (and the USA), with specific increases in college-going among Latinos and blacks. After 2008, as the recession hit New York, many more individuals applied to CUNY. This included many students with higher SAT scores and grade point averages. At the same time as demand for CUNY increased, all of CUNY's senior colleges raised their minimum SAT requirements and began to enroll fewer students.
- As a result, beginning in 2009, the makeup of CUNY colleges changed significantly. The incoming freshmen at top-tier schools had higher SAT scores and GPAs than those in previous years. Many students that previously had been able to enroll in top-tier schools were now enrolling in second-tier senior colleges. And more freshmen with scores that would have previously allowed them to get into a four-year college program were enrolling in community colleges.

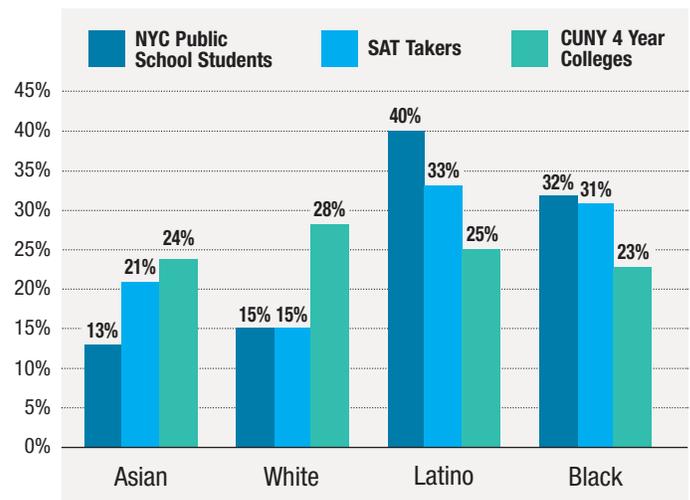
Changes in Freshman Enrollment Shares at CUNY, 2008-2010



- These dynamics had a clear impact, if an unintended one, on the racial and ethnic distribution of the CUNY system after 2008. Senior colleges, particularly the top-tier campuses, became much less likely to enroll black and Latino freshmen.
- The slow decline in the share of black students at the senior colleges that began in 2001 accelerated significantly after 2008. Whereas black students had declined as a share of CUNY senior colleges since 2001, the broader growth in total enrollment had meant that they still increased in terms of numbers. But in the two years after 2008, blacks lost as much of a share in senior colleges as they did in the seven years prior, including steep drops in their numbers and share at the best schools. By 2010, just one in ten freshman entering top-tier senior colleges at CUNY was black.
- Latino students, who had made significant gains in admission to the top senior colleges since 2001, lost all of those gains in just two years. From 2001 to 2008, Latinos had increased their presence at all levels of CUNY schools. Yet in the two years after 2008, they lost most of their gains at senior colleges, with dramatic declines in top-tier schools. From 2001 to 2008, the number of Latino freshman at top-tier schools increased by 40 percent. By 2010, that entire increase was erased.
- Black and Latino students made up 60 percent of new freshmen at CUNY in 2010. But they made up only 47 percent of senior college enrollment, and just 28 percent of enrollment at top-tier schools. These changes are occurring when the number of

black and Latino students in New York City public high schools who are taking the SAT exam—the traditional signal of intent to attend a four-year college—is higher than ever. As the chart below shows, the shares of blacks and Latinos at CUNY senior colleges are much lower than their shares of New York City public school students and SAT takers. For Asians and whites, the reverse is true.

2010 Shares of Student Populations by Race/Ethnicity



Considerations Moving Forward

CUNY remains one of the most diverse college systems in the country. Yet black and Latino students are now far less likely than they were before 2009 to be enrolled in a CUNY senior college, particularly those in the top tier, where student outcomes in terms of retention and graduation are far higher than they are at the community colleges. In theory, CUNY’s community colleges exist as an opportunity from which lower-scoring students can enter the system and transition into four-year programs. Were the data about CUNY community college performance more promising, these trends would be less disturbing. But given the fact that so few students successfully graduate or transition from the CUNY community colleges—fewer than one-third obtain any type of degree after six years—we cannot rely on them to counter these trends that accelerated so quickly after 2008.

Research across a national sample of colleges shows that schools with strong graduation rates produce better outcomes, even controlling for the initial test scores of the students themselves. Thus, by limiting opportunities for blacks and Latinos at senior colleges, and increasing their enrollment in lower-performing schools, we are actively

It is troubling that not only are black and Latino communities bearing the brunt of fewer job opportunities, but that they are simultaneously losing chances to enroll in CUNY senior colleges.

widening an achievement gap that will have repercussions long into the future. CUNY has the potential to be our city's great equalizer—we should be careful not to let it reproduce and perpetuate patterns of inequality.

The greater numbers of high-scoring students at CUNY schools, while positive when viewed on their own, may have resulted in fewer affordable educational opportunities at senior colleges for black and Latino students. These two priorities may have fallen out of balance. The broad shifts toward greater selectiveness from 2001 to 2008 are not at question here; rather, it is the rapid acceleration of these trends, and their unintended impacts on black and Latino students after the recession that causes concern.

CUNY should be able to differentiate long-term trends from shorter-term dynamics, and actively manage enrollment to place and support more black and Latino students in four-year college programs. As a public institution representing the City of New York, it has an obligation to take a broader view of the various factors that impact enrollment, particularly during downturns. The recent recession hit black and Latino individuals harder than other segments of the population. The unemployment rate for blacks and Latinos increased far more (7.2 and 5.5 percentage points, respectively) than it did for whites and Asians (2.6 and 3.5 percentage points). It is troubling that not only are black and Latino communities bearing the brunt of fewer job opportunities, but that they are simultaneously losing chances to enroll in CUNY senior colleges.

We recommend that CUNY proactively work to ensure continued access for all demographic groups to the full range of its institutions, especially in bad economic times, when job opportunities shrink and educational credentials become even more important. Our recommendations fall into two categories, **preparation** and **opportunity**. The K–12 school preparation system needs to continue to improve, but cannot receive the blame for the major shifts in the makeup of CUNY senior colleges that took place in such a short period of time. CUNY already conducts valuable pre-college initiatives, through its Collaborative Programs department, to prepare students before they apply to college. Yet these important efforts have not been able to stand up to other enrollment pressures that have led to significantly decreased numbers of black and Latino students at senior colleges. As such, we focus most of our recommendations on ways that CUNY can provide continued access and opportunity for black and Latino students at all of its constituent schools.

1. Preparation: what can be done to improve the ability of black and Latino students to compete with other CUNY applicants?

The most straightforward solution to increasing diversity at top CUNY schools would be for New York City to graduate higher numbers of well-prepared black and Latino applicants from its high schools. Practitioners and policymakers actively working in the field of college readiness have offered ideas for doing this, and we urge their careful consideration.

2. Opportunity: what can CUNY do to ensure black and Latino students have access to four-year colleges?

Better preparation alone, however, is unlikely to achieve the desired goal of adequate representation of black and Latino students in the short term. The achievement gap between white/Asian and black/Latino high school students has persisted for years, and has diminished only slightly in recent years despite our best efforts. CUNY should act to ensure opportunities for black and Latino students at all its colleges that can withstand cyclical, short-term labor market shifts.

CUNY should engage in a major, systematic effort to examine how to promote diversity in its senior colleges without sacrificing their quality. This should include an investigation of practices from colleges and universities across the country, and discussions with leading experts in the field. This effort will require a significant investment of resources by CUNY.

More immediately, we recommend that CUNY take several specific steps to increase the enrollment of black and Latino students at top- and second-tier four-year colleges:

- Expand outreach efforts to attract more applications from black and Latino students to top CUNY schools.
- Institute a more comprehensive application review process at top schools.
- Reinstitute and strengthen the conditional summer admissions programs at senior colleges.
- Engage external organizations in programs to support the retention and success of black and Latino students with lower SAT scores at senior colleges.

These recommendations are discussed in greater detail in the body of this report. The larger question for CUNY is if it is willing to invest in these students, and whether it can put aside its aspirations for higher national rankings—which are in part based on SAT scores—for a greater good.

Introduction & Background



In this document, we present an analysis of trends in the demographic characteristics and test scores of incoming freshmen at the City University of New York (CUNY) to identify changes in the mix of students at colleges within the CUNY system. We are grateful to the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) for providing us with data.²

We examine the extent to which the changes in the labor market that began with the recent recession may have affected sub-groups of individuals who apply to and enroll in CUNY undergraduate colleges. While enrollment has expanded since 2001, there has been an even greater surge of interest in CUNY since the onset of the recession. This project analyzes and differentiates the longer-term trends in CUNY freshman enrollment from more recent ones, with an eye to how sub-groups who are traditionally less likely to attend college have been affected.

This report restricts its analysis to freshmen, so as to understand the opportunities available to graduating high school students seeking to enroll in CUNY. We intentionally chose not to include an analysis of transfer students, who cannot be easily compared to freshmen. Transfers to CUNY senior colleges come from public and private schools, began college initially at different times, and have already experienced a level of success in college. However, an analysis of enrollment including transfer students shows very similar patterns to those described in this report.

Broadly, our work will cover:

- What trends do we see in quantitative data about CUNY enrollment?
- What are the implications of these trends? To what extent do they raise concerns that CUNY might want to actively manage?
- If concerns are identified, how might they be addressed by policies and practices?

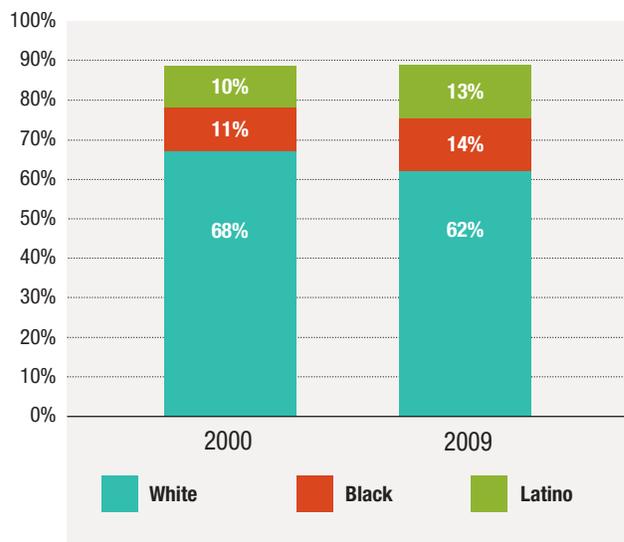
Background

Ten-year trend: increasing college enrollment across the nation

College enrollment in the United States has increased significantly over the last decade. Changing demographics have been partly responsible for the increase, as the number of college-age Americans rose by more than 3.5 million from 1999 to 2009. At the same time, a greater percentage of young Americans were deciding to attend college: the proportion of 18 to 24-year-olds in college increased from 36 to 41 percent, as the value of a college education continues to grow.³ In 2010, the national unemployment rate for college graduates was 4.7 percent, compared to 10.3 percent for those with only a high school diploma.⁴ The college wage premium—how much more one makes with a college degree than without one—is at an all time high. Bachelor’s degree holders in 2010 earned 66 percent more on average than individuals with only a high school diploma,⁵ and can expect to earn 1.5 times more over their lifetime.⁶

Much of the increase in college enrollment over the last ten years has been due to expanded college participation among young people of color, who traditionally have had lower college-going rates. From 1994–2008, there was a 34 percent increase in overall college enrollment, with whites increasing their enrollment by 16 percent, blacks by 78 percent, and Latinos by 117 percent.⁷ These dynamics were reflected in the shares of each race/ethnicity on college campuses. In 2000, 68 percent of students at degree granting institutions were white, 11 percent were black, and 10 percent were Latino. By 2009, whites had dropped to 62 percent of students, with blacks and Latinos increasing their share to 14 and 13 percent, respectively.⁸ (These newer figures bring college-going rates closer in line with the broader racial/ethnic breakdown of the U.S. population: Whites 62%, Latinos 16%, and blacks 13%.)

Chart 1: Share of College Students across the Nation, by Race/Ethnicity

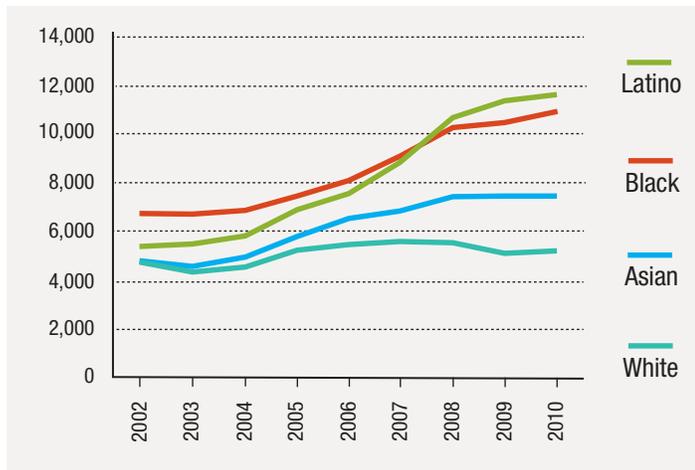


College-going trends in New York City

The CUNY system has generally followed these national trends. From 2001–2008, there was a 37 percent increase in freshman enrollment at CUNY, a 35 percent increase at CUNY’s eleven senior colleges, and a 41 percent increase at the six community colleges. As overall enrollment grew, CUNY enrolled more members of every racial and ethnic group. (However, their respective shares within each level of the system changed distinctly, as we will discuss later in this report.)

New York City public high school students are the main source of CUNY enrollment (73% of first-time freshman in 2010), and their rates of college-going have increased significantly. In 2002, 31,252 New York City public high school students took the SAT exam, the traditional signal of intention to attend a four-year college; by 2010, this figure had risen to 40,110, a 28 percent increase. This increase occurred across all groups, but was greatest among Latinos (116% increase), blacks (62% increase), and Asians (56% increase), compared to whites (10% increase), who already had very high rates of college-going, relative to their share of the population. The broader base of students taking the exam led to a slight drop in the average combined Math and Reading SAT score, which went from 912 in 2002 to 901 in 2010.⁹

Chart 2: Number of NYC Public High School Students Taking the SAT Exam



Shorter-term trends: how labor market cycles affect college enrollment

During periods of recession, or slow economic growth, there is often a special emphasis on the value of attending college. The opportunity cost of college—in terms of earnings that one could have made from employment—is decreased in weaker job markets. And for some, returning to college after many years in the workforce is something that is almost forced upon them—by layoffs and hiring trends that often make it difficult to find a new job in one’s field.¹⁰

Not all colleges are affected the same way by a weak labor market. During recessions, some more expensive, private universities brace for decreases in the number of applications they receive and the number of students who decide to enroll.¹¹ This is due in large part to the number of students who choose to apply and enroll in less expensive public universities, to offset changes in household financial circumstances.¹² The cost of college has soared, with private universities leading the cost increases. For CUNY, these trends have coincided with an unprecedented surge in applications and enrollment. The costs of CUNY to New York residents are extremely competitive, before financial aid is taken into account. At CUNY, tuition, fees, and expenses are approximately \$11,500 for someone living at home or \$21,000 for a student living independently, compared with \$31,000 and \$45,000 for the same costs at a private college.¹³

CUNY enrollment during the recession

A surge in enrollment during the employment crisis that hit New York in 2008 led to changes in standard CUNY admissions processes. In 2009, five of CUNY’s six community colleges closed their admissions early for the first time. Traditionally, the community colleges accepted applications until the first week of classes—a process of open, rolling admissions. The surge in the number of applications forced them to change this policy in 2009 and again in 2010, when all of the schools in the CUNY system imposed an across the board cutoff date for applications.¹⁴

By May of 2010, CUNY had already received over 70,000 applications for the upcoming fall semester (in which about 35,000 new students enrolled), a 19 percent increase from the number of applications they received in 2009, which had already been a record year. CUNY officials acknowledged that much of the increase in applications was related to the slumping economy.¹⁵ With unemployment high, wages stagnant or falling, and the rising costs of health care, housing, and other basic necessities, students and parents sought to save where they could, making CUNY a more attractive option for many.

Analysis of Enrollment Data



The enrollment data analyzed in this document was provided to us by CUNY’s Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA). OIRA provided us with tabular data on first-time freshman enrollment by race/ethnicity, gender, high school achievement and aptitude, and type of high school attended. We were not able to obtain detailed application data, which may be useful to answer some of the questions raised by this work.¹⁶

Methods of Analysis

This report analyzes first-time freshman enrollment data for 2001, 2008, and 2010. The period of 2001–2008 allows us to look at medium-term enrollment trends, and 2008 to 2010 gives us a picture of what happened after the onset of the recession. Our initial hypothesis was that 2008 may have represented an inflection point for many trends in enrollment within key sub-groups of the CUNY freshman population at different types of schools. Beginning in 2009, CUNY saw a surge in applications and enrollment beyond the growth it had experienced in the prior years.

As we look at enrollment data, it is important to remember that the CUNY system of schools is diverse, and is comprised of four-year and two-year programs of differing nature, quality, and appeal to students. The quality of CUNY colleges is generally thought of in three tiers:¹⁷

1. Top-Tier Senior Colleges: Baruch, Hunter, Brooklyn, City, and Queens Colleges;

2. Second-Tier Senior Colleges: York, Lehman, John Jay, City Tech, College of Staten Island, and Medgar Evers Colleges;¹⁸

3. Community Colleges: Borough of Manhattan (BMCC), LaGuardia, Hostos, Bronx, Queensborough, and Kingsborough Community Colleges.

The development of what could be considered tiers stems from the work of a 1999 Mayoral Task Force on revitalizing CUNY, led by former Yale University president Benno C. Schmidt (who is now the Chairman of the CUNY Board of Trustees).¹⁹ The resulting report of what became known as the Schmidt Commission recommended the end of remediation at senior colleges, and the establishment of greater selectivity at a subset of colleges through more strict use of SAT scores in reviewing applications.²⁰ The report also clearly outlined the plans for a three-tiered system of highly selective senior colleges at the top; another group of senior colleges that are more accessible but still selective; and a broader community college system that is open to all students with high school or equivalent diplomas.²¹ These tiers provide useful distinctions for our analysis. Within them, Baruch College is the most selective and popular senior college, and BMCC is the most popular community college.

CUNY admission and enrollment is complex. Prospective students do not apply to each school separately, as they would to most private and many public universities. Rather, they submit a single application to the CUNY system, in which they rank up to six schools that they are interested in attending. (This is the process for general first-time freshman enrollment. Application as a transfer student, or as a freshman to the Macaulay Honors Program, works differently.²²) Each separate college submits minimum admissions requirements—largely based on a combination of SAT scores and grade point average—to a CUNY central office, which uses those criteria to make admissions decisions on a rolling basis. As such, students with strong applications who apply early in the process have the best chance of being admitted into their schools of choice.

If students are not accepted into any of the schools they have applied to, they are contacted by the central CUNY enrollment office, which guides them to reapply to other schools, including at least one community college. No

applicants are guaranteed admission into the type of program they prefer (four- or two-year), but for the most part, CUNY maintains a policy of finding a school for all of its applicants.²³ This policy has been strained in recent years due to surging applications and enrollment.

As the table below shows, CUNY enrollment has increased significantly in recent years. From 2001 to 2008, CUNY’s enrollment of first-time freshman students increased by 37 percent, from 25,391 to 34,872, a new high for the CUNY system.²⁴ But the economic recession that began in 2008 led to even greater surges in enrollment; in 2009, 37,241 new students entered CUNY, an increase of 7 percent in a single year. This influx of students, combined with the increased numbers who remained from earlier freshman classes, tested the capacity of CUNY schools. Over the past several years, CUNY dealt with its enrollment capacity challenges by expanding its instructional schedules. Schools at CUNY now offer classes from 7:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. on the campuses of two- and four-year schools.

CUNY Freshman Enrollment	2001	2008	2009	2010	% change 2001-08	% change 2008-10
ALL CUNY SCHOOLS	25,391	34,872	37,241	34,829	37%	0%
Senior Colleges	14,570	19,602	20,019	17,322	35%	-12%
-Top-tier	6,740	8,363	7,932	7,085	24%	-15%
-Second-tier	7,830	11,221	12,007	10,219	43%	-9%
Community Colleges	10,821	15,270	17,222	17,507	41%	15%

*First time freshmen in the professional studies program were included in the totals for “Senior Colleges” but not within either of the tiers. Therefore, senior college totals may not reflect exactly the sum of the top tier and second tier schools. There were 18 such students in 2008, 80 in 2009, and 18 in 2010.

In 2010, CUNY began to more actively manage the size of enrollment within the colleges. Fewer freshmen were newly enrolled (34,829), particularly at four-year schools (after increasing steadily since 2001). Between 2008 and 2009, at the same time as CUNY began receiving an even greater volume of new applications, many of its senior colleges implemented higher minimum admissions standards, requiring some combination of higher SATs or grade point averages. According to CUNY, “the higher admissions standards belong to a multi-year, multi-pronged effort to raise academic standards.”²⁵ Just prior, most of the senior colleges also ended a policy of

“conditional admissions,” whereby students with low SAT scores could take summer immersion classes to build their skills before entering colleges with higher standards.²⁶ As we will discuss, these changes in admissions and enrollment policies had distinct effects on different sub-groups of CUNY enrollees.

Using the data that was provided to us, this document analyzes enrollment trends first by student scores, then by the race and ethnicity of new enrollees.

Trends in Freshmen Enrollment by Student Scores

The two primary measures that CUNY uses to assess applicant achievement are SAT and CAA (College Admissions Average, CUNY’s standardized measure of high school grade point average) scores. For purposes of context, the average combined score of New York City public high school students on the reading and math sections of the SAT in 2010 was 901 out of 1600.²⁷ (Since only a subset of high school students take the SAT, the score might be used as a rough estimate of the average level of achievement of New York City high school students with a clear interest in attending a four-year college.)

2001–2008: Higher student scores, increased selectivity at four-year schools

The overall growth in enrollment from 2001 to 2008 brought larger numbers of all groups, including students with high scores, into the CUNY system. The distribution of students across the colleges, when viewed through SAT scores, appears consistent with the vision of the Schmidt Commission and the resulting 2000 CUNY Master Plan. At senior colleges, freshman enrollment increased by over a third, with those scoring over 1000 on the SAT enjoying the greatest gains. Growth in freshman enrollment at senior colleges was double for those scoring over 1000 on the SAT (57 percent increase) than for those who scored under 1000 (28 percent). At the top-tier senior colleges, growth was limited to only those who scored above 1000 on the SAT. By 2008, the share of students scoring under 1000 at top-tier senior colleges had dropped to 35 percent, from 48 percent in 2001. The very top schools enrolled a greater share of students scoring between 1200 and 1600 on the SAT. In 2001, students in that range made up 14 percent of freshman enrollment at Baruch and 8 percent at Hunter. By 2008,

those numbers were up to 33 percent for Baruch and 21 percent for Hunter.

Enrollment at Senior Colleges by SAT Score

Chart 3: Overall Freshman Enrollment

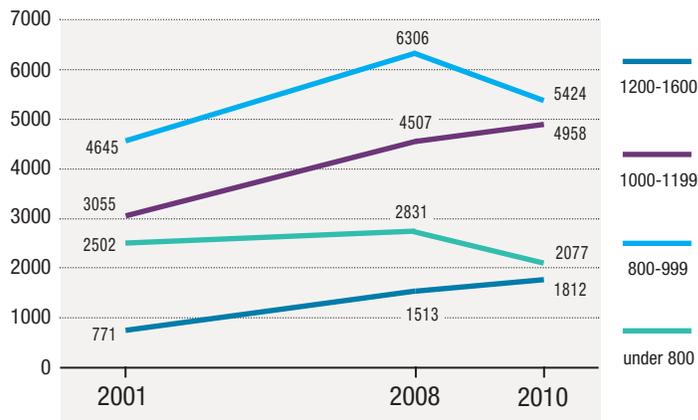
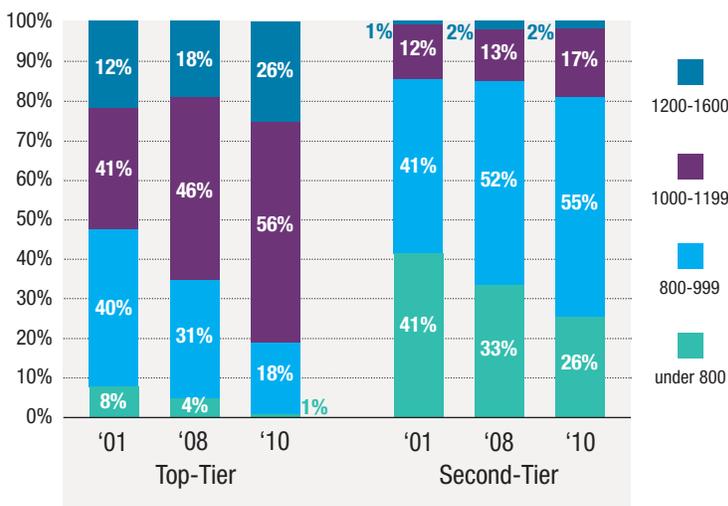


Chart 4: Share of Freshman Enrollment



Students with lower SAT scores began to lose ground. Those with an SAT score under 800 made up 41 percent of freshman enrollment at second-tier colleges in 2001; that dipped to 33 percent in 2008. These students were replaced at second-tier senior colleges with students in the 800–999 range, who used to be able to enroll in top-tier schools.

2008–2010: Overall enrollment decreases; high scorers accelerate dominance at top schools

The pace of these trends toward greater selectivity based on SAT score accelerated considerably from 2008 to 2010. Students with SAT scores under 1000 lost more

By 2010, students with an SAT score under 1000 accounted for 19 percent of freshman enrollment at top-tier senior colleges, down from 35 percent two years earlier.

ground in the two years after 2008 than in the seven years from 2001 to 2008. After dropping from 65 percent to 60 percent (2001 to 2008), they fell to 53 percent of freshmen at senior colleges in 2010.

From 2008–2010, overall freshman enrollment shrank at senior colleges, and the decrease came exclusively at the hands of those who scored below 1000 on the SAT. There was a 12 percent decrease in overall enrollment at senior colleges from 2008–2010, but there was actually an increase (in numbers and share) in enrollment for those who scored above 1000 on the SAT. Freshman enrollment of students with scores in the 800–999 range—the largest part of the distribution of New York City high school students, given their average SAT score of 901—decreased by 14 percent.

At the top senior colleges, those with average and lower scores accelerated their already steep decline in share of freshman enrollment. By 2010, students with an SAT score under 1000 accounted for 19 percent of freshman enrollment at top-tier senior colleges, down from 35 percent two years earlier. Students with the highest SAT scores made up a greater share of freshman enrollment:

- At Baruch College, those with an SAT score between 1200 and 1600 represented 45 percent of freshman enrollment in 2010, up from 33 percent in 2008 and just 14 percent in 2001.
- At Hunter College, students with SAT scores in that range represented 34 percent of freshman enrollment in 2010, up from 21 percent in 2008 and just 8 percent in 2001.

Chart 5: Share of Enrollment—Under 1000 SAT

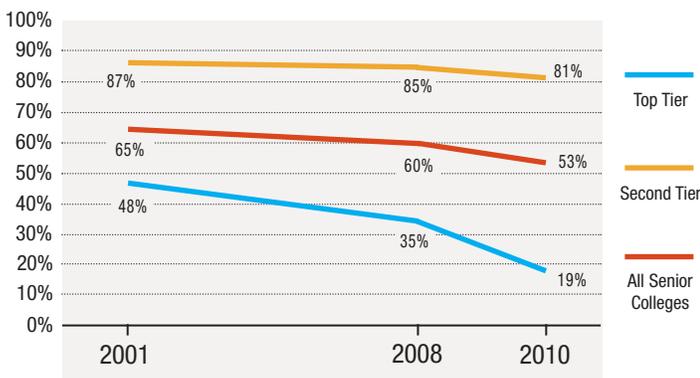
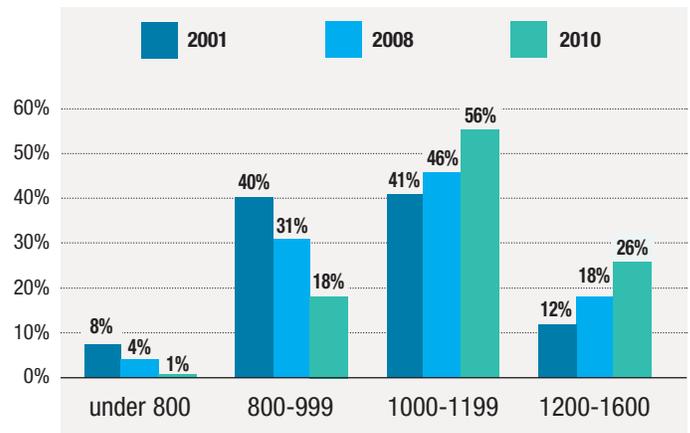


Chart 6: Share of Enrollment—Top-tier Colleges



At the other top-tier schools, enrollment of students scoring between 1000 and 1199 increased significantly—at a rate much faster than that from 2001 to 2008.

- At Brooklyn College, these students represented 63 percent of freshman enrollment in 2010, up from 39 percent in 2008.
- At Queens College, students in that range represented 67 percent of freshman enrollment in 2010, up from 46 percent in 2008.

These top-tier schools had previously enrolled a large number of students scoring between 800 and 999 on the SAT, but these students’ opportunities shrank significantly after 2008:

- At Brooklyn College, students in the 800–999 range represented just 22 percent of freshman enrollment in 2010, down from 42 percent in 2008.
- At Queens College, they represented 15 percent of freshman enrollment in 2010, down from 36 percent in 2008.
- At Hunter College, these students represented 6 percent of freshman enrollment in 2010, down from 23 percent in 2008 and 44 percent in 2001.

Share of Enrollment at Top-tier Senior Colleges by SAT Score

Chart 7: 1200–1600 SAT Score

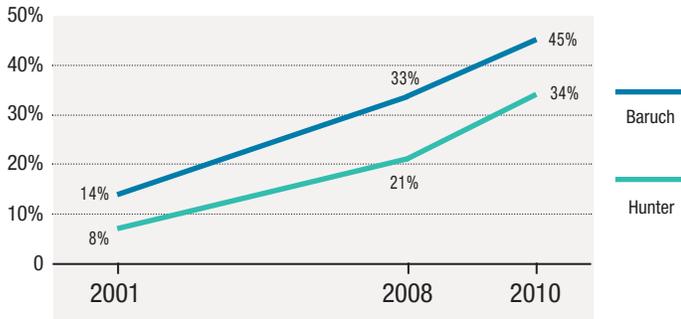
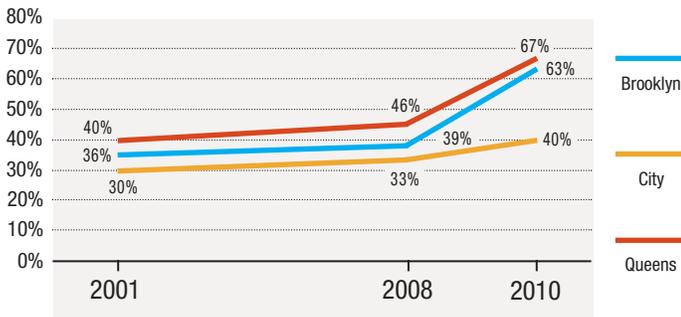


Chart 8: 1000–1199 SAT Score



The trends cited above appear to have resulted in second-tier schools now enrolling more students scoring in the 800–1199 ranges—students who might previously have attended top tier colleges. The second-tier senior colleges no longer enroll as many students without average to high SAT scores.

Share of Enrollment at Senior Colleges by SAT Score

Chart 9: 800–999 SAT Scorers in Top Tier

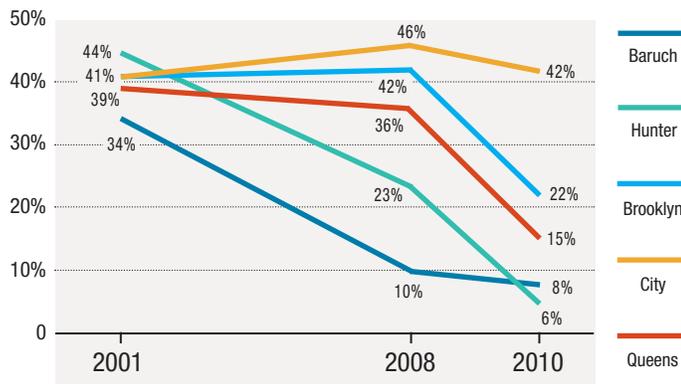
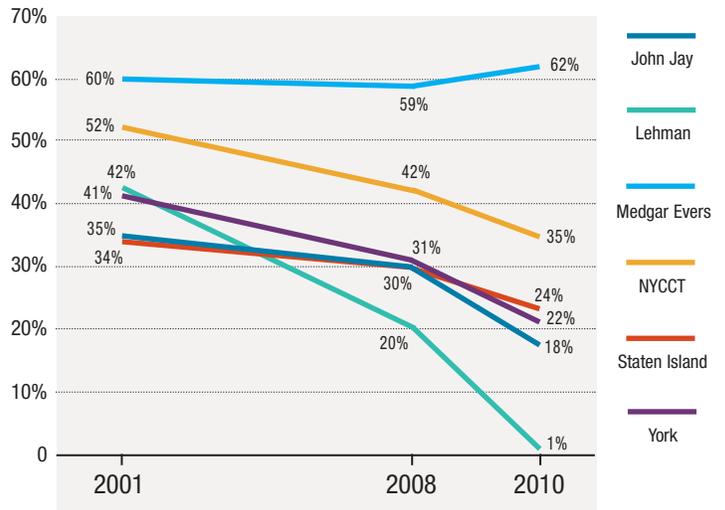


Chart 10: Under 800 SAT Score in Second Tier

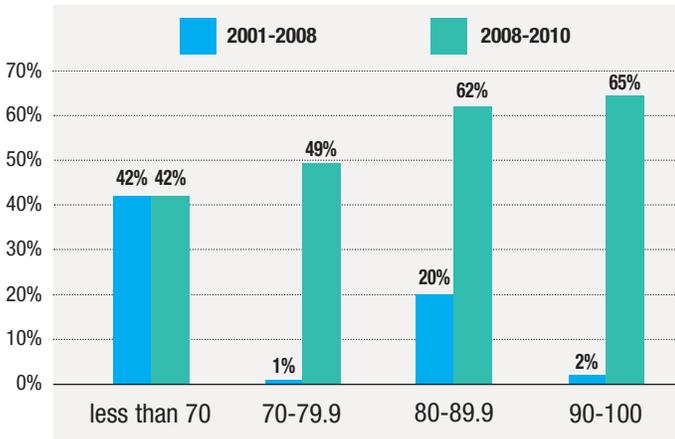


As fewer students with SAT scores under 800 are enrolling at senior colleges, one would assume that these students are enrolling at community colleges instead. CUNY does not keep SAT data on freshman enrollment at community colleges (since SAT scores are not required for applicants), but looking at high school grade point averages suggests that higher-achieving students are now enrolling in community colleges.²⁸ Freshman enrollment trends at senior colleges along high school grade point average, as represented by College Admissions Average (CAA) scores, follow the same pattern as for SAT scores: across the senior colleges, students with higher CAA scores are making up a larger share of freshman classes.

Higher achievers at community colleges

From 2008 to 2010, the composition of community colleges changed, with higher-credentialed students becoming a larger presence. During the period of growth from 2001–2008, community college enrollment growth was primarily among those with a CAA score under 70: these students represented 28 percent of freshman enrollment in 2008, up from 22 percent in 2001. This dynamic changed dramatically after 2008. The increase in community college enrollment after 2008 came from students of all levels, including students with high grade point averages.

Chart 11: Percentage Increase in Enrollment at Community Colleges by CAA Score (not share of students by CAA score)



It is worth connecting the increase in enrollment of higher-credentialed students at community colleges to the raising of admissions requirements at the senior colleges. Prior to 2008, applicants to senior colleges were required to have a math score of 480 on the SAT. Starting with the Fall 2008 class, prospective students needed a score of 500 to be considered for a senior college and a score of 510 to be considered for one of the top-tier senior colleges. In some cases, individual colleges raised their own requirements, as well. Prior to 2009, Brooklyn College applicants needed a CAA score of 77 along with a 910 on the SAT to gain acceptance. After 2009, Brooklyn College required a minimum CAA score of 81 and a minimum combined SAT score of 1000.

The increase in enrollment at CUNY over the last decade has brought more high achievers to the university than ever before. Students with the highest scores comprise a significantly greater share of freshman enrollment at the top-tier senior colleges than they did just two years ago. At second-tier colleges, students with SAT scores between 800 and 1200 are increasing their share of freshman enrollment. Consequently, those with the lowest scores see fewer opportunities at senior colleges. Community colleges have increased their enrollment to include these low scorers, but they are also taking in more high-achieving students, who in years prior would have been able to enroll in a four-year college.²⁹

Freshmen Enrollment Trends by Race

As we have shown, enrollment increased dramatically between 2001 and 2010. However, different racial/ethnic

sub-groups experienced very distinct growth trends over the time frame.

Overall Enrollment of First-time Freshmen by Race/Ethnicity

Chart 12: by Overall Numbers

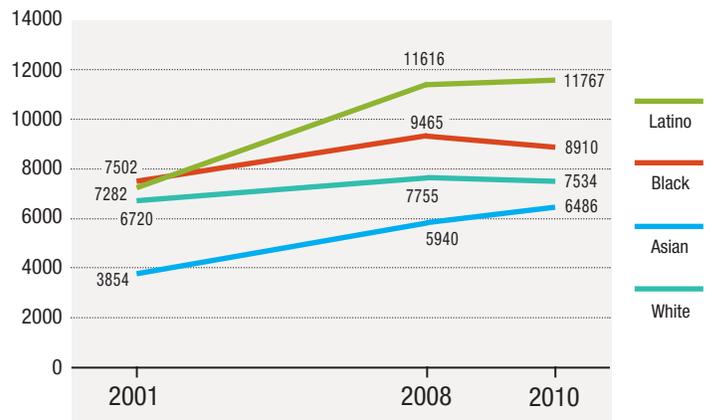
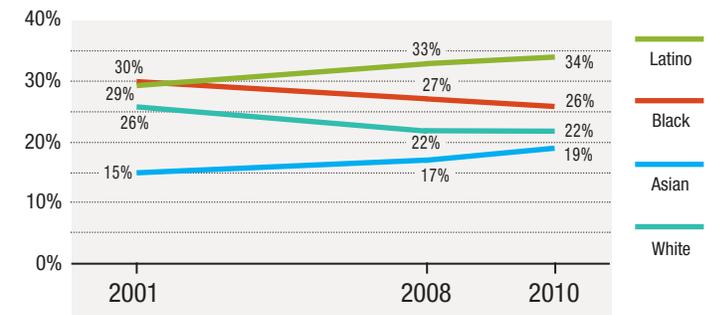


Chart 13: by Share of the Freshman Class



Freshman enrollment across the colleges for all groups increased from 2001 to 2010, in some cases quite dramatically. However, the enrollment dynamics after 2008 were experienced differently by different groups, leading to continued increased enrollment for some, and decreased numbers for other groups. Whereas all groups increased their enrollment from 2001 to 2008, only Asians and Latinos (slightly) continued to grow from 2008 to 2010, while there were fewer blacks and whites as CUNY shrunk overall enrollment. Yet despite the overall increased numbers for all sub-groups, there were major differences in the trends of each sub-groups' share of enrollment. Asians saw constant growth, with some acceleration after 2008; whites saw a drop in their share from 2001 to 2008 when enrollment increased, yet their share did not decrease from 2008 to 2010 when there was an overall contraction in enrollment; Latinos saw steady overall growth (although, as we will discuss, their

In 2001, 54 percent of black first-time freshman were enrolling in a four-year college; by 2008, this had dropped slightly, to 51 percent. Between 2008 and 2010, the share of blacks who were in four-year colleges fell much farther, to 44 percent.

distribution within CUNY fluctuated greatly); whereas the trend for blacks was one of steady decline from 2001 to 2010. This section looks at the trends within these sub-groups in greater detail.

Relatively fewer opportunities for black students

Overall, there has been a steady decrease in black students as a proportion of all new CUNY enrollees. In 2001, blacks made up 30 percent of all first-time freshmen throughout the CUNY system. By 2008, this had dropped to 27 percent. This decrease was perhaps ameliorated by the fact that, despite their lower share of the student population, there were more blacks entering CUNY colleges, as CUNY was enrolling much greater numbers of freshmen in 2008. From 2001-2008, total enrollment went up by 37 percent overall, but only 26 percent for blacks. Blacks were reaping a lower proportion of the gains of increased enrollment from 2001 to 2008, but they were still increasing their absolute numbers.

The same cannot be said after the recession. From 2008 to 2010, the share of black freshmen dropped, from 27 percent to 26 percent, as did the number of new black enrollees, from 9,465 to 8,910. CUNY began admitting fewer new students in 2009 and 2010, and blacks made up a disproportionately high share of those who were no longer a part of the new freshman class. Enrollment dropped 7 percent overall between 2009 and 2010, but 11 percent for blacks. While blacks as a share of entering students overall showed only a slight decline, this masks a more significant shift: after dropping from 17 percent to 14 percent in the seven years after 2001, the percentage of blacks at top-tier senior colleges fell to just 10 percent by 2010

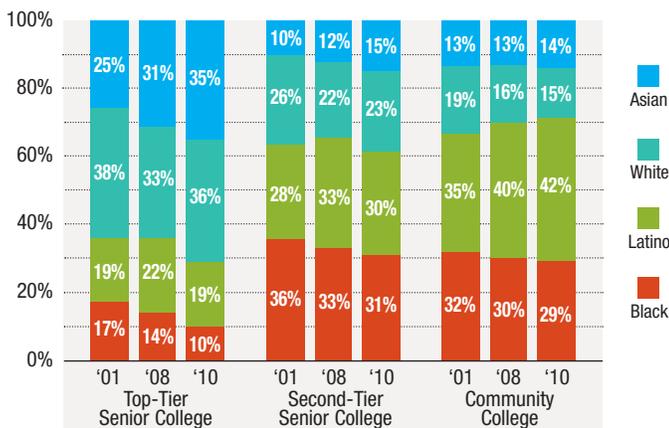
There have been significant changes in the makeup of the different segments of the CUNY system. Black students in 2010 made up a smaller percentage of the population of incoming freshmen at all levels of CUNY, but their decreases were largest at the more selective schools. At Baruch College, widely regarded as the jewel of the CUNY undergraduate system, the share of black students plummeted after 2008. From 2001 to 2008, despite the implementation of the tier-related recommendations of the CUNY Master Plan, the share of Baruch’s black freshman dropped only from 12 percent to 10 percent. But in just two years from 2008 to 2010, the share of Baruch freshmen who were black fell to just 6 percent. Although comparisons are complicated, the 2010 freshman class at Harvard College was 11 percent black.

Blacks have also decreased as a share of students in second-tier senior colleges, from 36 percent in 2001 to 33 percent in 2008, to 31 percent in 2010. These decreases come during a period when far more black high school students in New York City are expressing an interest in college. In 2002, 6,763 black public high school students took the SAT exam; in 2010, this figure had risen to 10,940.³⁰

Black enrollment has increasingly shifted to two-year colleges, most dramatically since 2008

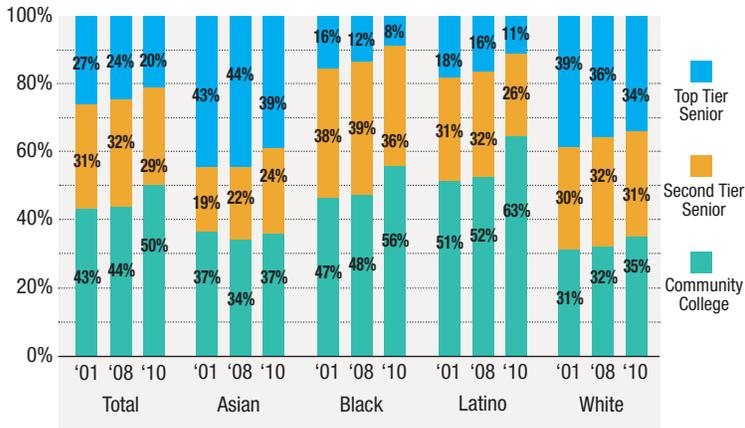
Blacks have made up a decreasing share of the population of CUNY freshmen, a dynamic that has accelerated since 2008, particularly at the more selective schools. Within the population at CUNY, we see that black students who have enrolled have become much less likely to attend top CUNY schools. Increasingly, black students have enrolled in community colleges.

Chart 14: Racial/Ethnic Makeup within Each CUNY Tier



Latinos made great gains at top-tier senior colleges between 2001 and 2008—but by 2010, all these gains at top schools were erased.

Chart 15: Percentage of Freshmen in the Three Tiers of CUNY Colleges by Race/Ethnicity



In 2001, 54 percent of black first-time freshman were enrolling in a four-year college; by 2008, this had dropped slightly, to 51 percent. Between 2008 and 2010, the share of blacks who were in four-year colleges fell much farther, to 44 percent. In two years after 2008, the share of black freshman at senior colleges fell more than twice as much as it had in the first seven years after the Schmidt Commission. For the first time, a clear majority (56 percent) of black freshmen enrollees were starting their CUNY educations in a community college.

If we assume that the quality of black students' applications did not change significantly over two years, it seems that blacks who might have attended a top-tier school before 2008 appear more likely to enroll in a second-tier school, and those who would have enrolled in a second-tier four-year college now appear to be more likely to start in a community college. The simultaneous increases in the enrollment of other ethnic groups and individuals with higher scores makes it appear that, rather than any decrease in the quality of black students' applications, blacks were not able to compete with newer applicants from other racial/ethnic groups with higher scores.

Latinos: major gains across CUNY from 2001–2008; gains at top schools erased from 2008–2010

Latino students were the group that perhaps gained the most during the CUNY expansion from 2001 to 2008. In 2001, 29 percent of all CUNY students were Latino—by 2008, this figure had risen to 33 percent. In terms of numbers, 7,282 Latino freshmen enrolled in 2001;

11,616 did so in 2008. Whereas CUNY freshmen enrollment overall grew by 37 percent from 2001–2008, growth of Latino freshmen enrollees outpaced this, growing by 60 percent. No ethnic/racial subgroup grew faster from 2001 to 2008.

Latino Freshman Enrollment

Chart 16: by Total Number

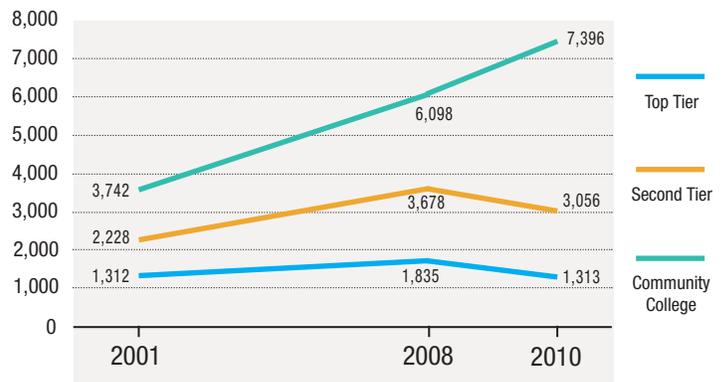
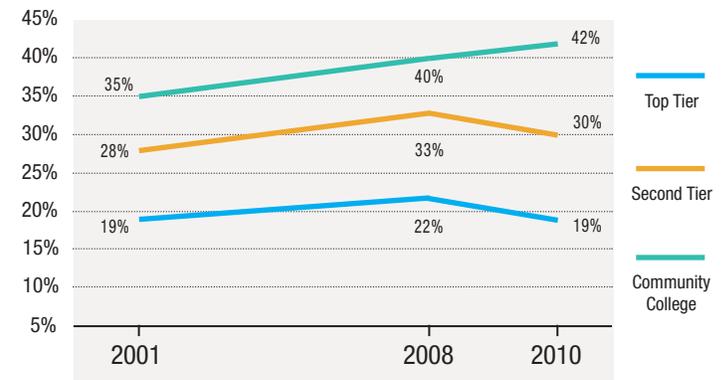


Chart 17: by Share of the Freshman Class



The 2001–2008 growth in the Latino population took place at all levels of the CUNY system. Latinos made up an increased share of the freshman population at top-tier senior colleges (19 percent to 22 percent), second-tier schools (28 percent to 33 percent), as well as community colleges (35 percent to 40 percent). While their greatest growth was in community colleges, both their overall numbers and their share of the populations at the higher levels—top-tier schools, in particular—increased significantly.

These dynamics changed drastically for Latinos after 2008. Although their total numbers at CUNY continued to increase, they saw significant losses in four-year colleges.

In the time period coinciding with the recession, white and Asian freshmen increased their numbers in four-year colleges, most dramatically at the top tier schools.

Latino freshman enrollment at top-tier schools dropped significantly—whereas Latino freshman enrollment was 1,835 in 2008 that number dropped to 1,313 in 2010, almost exactly where it had been in 2001. In the second-tier senior colleges, Latino freshmen showed a similar pattern: they made great gains in the seven years between 2001 and 2008, both in terms of their numbers and their share of the CUNY population. But after 2008, much like blacks, they bore a disproportionate share of the losses when the CUNY freshman classes shrank, particularly at the higher-quality schools. The numbers of Latino first-time freshmen at second-tier senior colleges grew from 2,228 in 2001 to 3,678 in 2008, but by 2010 this had dropped to 3,056. When combining top- and second-tier senior colleges, the 21 percent decrease in the number of Latinos, from 5,518 in 2008 to 4,371 in 2010 was considerably higher than the decrease for all groups (12 percent).

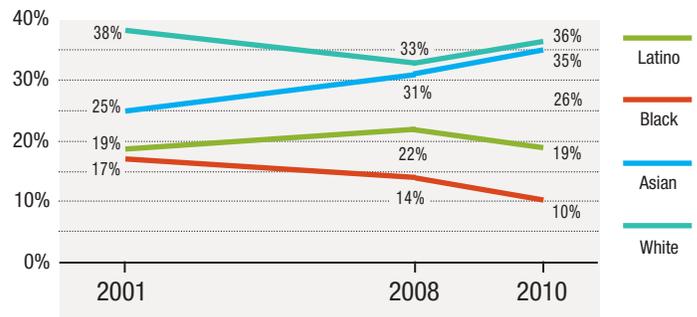
The number of Latino students enrolled in the entire CUNY system continued to increase from 2008 to 2010, but it was due to the fact that more Latinos than ever were enrolling in community colleges, to offset their displacement at the senior colleges.

Whites: decreases at top schools from 2001–2008, but sharp gains after the recession

Asians: continued growth, which accelerated even as overall enrollment shrank

CUNY experienced a slight increase in the number of white students from 2001, when 6,720 were enrolled, to 2008, when 7,555 white freshmen entered colleges in the system. Yet these numbers actually represented a decrease in white students’ share of the freshman class, from 26 percent in 2001 to 22 percent in 2008. The bulk of the increased CUNY enrollment from 2001 to 2008 was enjoyed by Latino and Asian students—as with blacks, the growth in white students was less than the average rate of overall enrollment. However, whites and blacks experienced very different growth trends between 2008 and 2010. Whereas blacks continued to decrease in their numbers and share of the freshman class after the recession, whites largely withstood the decreases in overall enrollment. In fact, in the time period coinciding with the recession, whites actually increased their numbers in four-year colleges, most dramatically at the top-tier schools.

Chart 18: Share of Freshman Enrollment at Top-tier Colleges



2008 represented a major shift in the direction of trends for Latino and white students at the best CUNY colleges. Latinos had been growing as a share of the top schools since 2001, but this changed dramatically after 2008. As we have discussed, the share of Latinos in top-tier schools in 2010 (18.5 percent) was actually lower than it was in 2001 (19.4 percent). Conversely, white students, who had been a decreasing proportion of the top schools from 2001 to 2008, reversed that trend and grew significantly from 2008 to 2010. Black and Asian students continued their respective downward and upward trends at these schools.

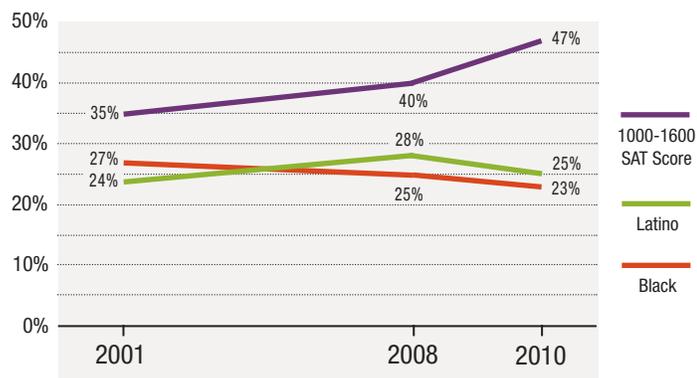
As we saw in Chart 2, Asians saw significant increases in enrollment from 2001 to 2010. Unlike other groups, they continued to grow in their overall number of new freshmen enrollees and in their share of the entire CUNY population through the recession. Whereas the freshman Asian population was about half (51 percent) of the black freshman population in 2001, the proportion had shifted to nearly three-quarters (73 percent) in 2010. Asians also make up a dramatically and disproportionately large percentage of the students at top CUNY schools. Despite being just 19 percent of the total CUNY population in 2010, Asians were 35 percent of freshmen at top-tier schools, about even with whites (36 percent), and a far higher share than blacks (10 percent) or Latinos (19 percent), despite the fact that far more Latinos and blacks ultimately enroll in CUNY.

After 2008, the fate of high SAT scorers on one hand, and that of blacks and Latinos on the other, diverged.

Summary of Findings

The increased competition for admission into CUNY schools since the recession has resulted in many students not being able to enroll in colleges they might have previously been able to attend. From our analysis, it appears that this is causing a crowding-out effect, as prospective students are pushed down from top-tier to lower-tier senior colleges, and from lower-tier senior schools to community colleges.³¹ The data used in this report does not allow us to connect the student achievement scores of new enrollees to their racial/ethnic backgrounds. However, when we view the separate variables side-by-side, particularly at four-year colleges, as in Chart 19, we can see that the two trends appear highly correlated: after 2008, the fate of high SAT scorers on one hand, and that of blacks and Latinos on the other, diverged significantly.

Chart 19: Share of Enrollment at All Senior Colleges



As we have noted, at the same time as applications and enrollment to CUNY spiked, senior colleges raised their minimum admissions requirements. However, enrollment is primarily a function of demand—if there were not more better-qualified applicants applying to these schools, they would not have been able to raise minimum requirements and fill their seats. CUNY senior colleges admit students on a rolling basis as long as they meet minimum scores. Raising minimum requirements in a period of increased demand allows schools to ensure that all high scorers are admitted first, with students who do not meet requirements only given consideration afterwards. Indeed, each of the senior colleges did enroll some number of students with scores below the published requirements.³²

It appears that black and Latino students have been adversely affected by short-term enrollment dynamics—which appear to be a combination of increased demand related to the labor market, as well as intentional policies on the part of the senior colleges to increase minimum SAT and GPA requirements—that have taken place since the onset of the recession, giving way in the four-year colleges to white and Asian students with strong SAT scores. Many black and Latino students who once were able to attend top-tier schools now attend second-tier colleges, and those who once were able to attend second-tier four-year colleges now enroll in community colleges. As CUNY schools have become more competitive, there are fewer options for black and Latino students.

Considerations Moving Forward



The greater numbers of high-scoring students at CUNY schools, while positive when viewed on their own, may have resulted in fewer affordable educational opportunities at senior colleges for new black and Latino students. These two priorities may have fallen out of balance. For many of these students, CUNY, because of its location and cost, may be their only opportunity to attend a four-year school. Most of these students can still enroll in the community colleges. However, as recent research suggests, starting one's collegiate pathway in a CUNY community college does not bode well—less than a third of new CUNY community college freshman will receive any type of degree (two- or four-year) within six years of entering.³³

There are also larger issues to consider about the mission of CUNY, as New York City's public university system, and the extent to which it aims to ensure opportunities for those graduating from New York City public high schools. How can CUNY continue to meet its historic role as a provider of high quality and affordable higher education to all New Yorkers who seek it?

In this section, we consider whether our findings warrant a policy response and offer some recommendations for ways CUNY might think about dealing with these issues.³⁴ Several questions drive our thinking about the mission and role of CUNY:

- To what extent does the responsibility for achieving diversity lie with New York City’s public high schools and the efforts to prepare students for college?
- Should the schools within CUNY seek to simply find and enroll the highest-achieving students possible?
- How can CUNY balance the desire to build its reputation as a high quality, affordable academic institution with its unique mission as the public university for a diverse city?
- Does CUNY have a broader mission as the public university system for the City of New York to have its student composition better reflect the make-up of the New York City public school population?
- If so, is this an obligation that should be shared by the schools throughout the CUNY system?

As we seek to answer these questions, it may be useful to divide our thinking into two sides of the problem: the preparation of black and Latino students for college, and the opportunity that is available to them when they seek to apply and enroll in CUNY.

Preparation

It seems obvious that CUNY would be more than happy to increase the diversity of its top schools if they received applications from students of color with higher scores. The K–12 public education system, and the larger economic inequalities that are the strongest predictors of educational outcomes, clearly share responsibility for the fact that black and Latino student applicants are not able to compete with white and Asian applicants to CUNY. We must continue to support ways to help students of color succeed at higher rates before they apply to college. But it is clearly positive that more black and Latino students are graduating high school and taking the SAT exam, and the K–12 system cannot be held accountable for short-term labor market shifts.

There are many existing efforts to improve the college readiness of black and Latino public high school students in New York City; there are also individuals working closely within the education field with far more expertise than us to judge those initiatives. A 2009 report by John Garvey, a former longtime CUNY administrator, found serious deficits within New York City high school graduates, across a series of measures of college readiness.³⁵ The report also described many existing initiatives to improve college readiness.³⁶ CUNY itself

already conducts valuable pre-college initiatives, through its Collaborative Programs department, to prepare students before they apply to college. But while preparation efforts are clearly important as a long-term structural approach, they cannot be the only response to the severe decrease in opportunities for black and Latino students at top CUNY schools that occurred over such a short period of time. These important efforts have not been able to stand up to other enrollment pressures that have led to significantly decreased numbers of black and Latino students at senior colleges after 2008.

Opportunity

CUNY has two compelling goals that can sometimes conflict in the short run. CUNY colleges aspire to be and be perceived as top academic institutions. And the system more broadly aims to provide wide access to affordable, quality educational opportunities to the young people of New York City. Affordable institutions such as CUNY schools are likely to receive a greater number of applicants during recessions. Among these new applicants will be a significant number of highly-qualified students who might, in other economic times, have applied to private institutions. CUNY can be seen to be doing one of two things. On the one hand, it can be viewed as taking a passive role in the enrollment process, essentially saying that it cannot or does not want to play an active part in determining the makeup of its campuses, despite short-term dynamics that are having a significant impact on the racial dimensions of who attends its colleges. Another view could be that CUNY is acting more consciously: increasing the minimum score requirements just at the time when applicant demographics are changing, with the explicit goal of improving its student body—as viewed largely through the strict lenses of SAT and GPA scores—at the direct expense of educational opportunities for black and Latino students.

The work of the Schmidt Commission introduced more of a tracking system at CUNY schools and increased selectivity at senior colleges since 2001. But it is important to differentiate the trends from 2001–2008 from those that occurred after the recession. Despite the increased selectivity promoted by the Schmidt Commission, the numbers of blacks and Latinos at senior colleges were not adversely affected before 2009. For blacks this was due to increases in overall enrollment, whereas Latinos saw absolute and relative gains at senior colleges. What occurred after 2008 was different, and beyond the

recommendations of the Schmidt Commission report, which stated that “The selective senior colleges must have admissions and recruitment policies that ensure diversity within the context of high standards.”³⁷

We should be very concerned about the fact that black and Latino students are now far less likely than they were just two years ago to be enrolled in the more selective CUNY colleges, where student outcomes in terms of retention and graduation are far higher than they are at the community colleges. It is not clear if or when the demand for CUNY will change as the economy improves, but the availability of opportunities for black and Latino students should not necessarily depend on this possibility. Were the data about CUNY community college performance more promising, these trends would be less worrisome.

CUNY should be able to differentiate long-term trends from shorter-term dynamics, and actively manage enrollment to place and support more black and Latino students in four-year college programs. As a public institution representing the City of New York, it has an obligation to take a broader view of the various factors that impact enrollment, particularly during downturns. The recent recession had employment-related impacts that hit black and Latino individuals harder than other segments of the population. The unemployment rate among blacks increased 7.2 percentage points from 2006 through the end of 2009; for Latinos, unemployment rose 5.5 percentage points. Whites and Asians saw much lower increases in unemployment, of 2.6 and 3.5 points.³⁸ It is troubling that not only are black and Latino communities bearing the brunt of fewer job opportunities, but that they are simultaneously losing chances to enroll in four-year CUNY schools.

The debate about affirmative action at colleges and universities has been bolstered in recent years by research. In the work for their 1999 book, *Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*, William Bowen, former president of Princeton University, and Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University, collected a considerable amount of empirical data about the value of affirmative action policies. In their review of the during and post-college experiences of 60,000 students who entered selective schools across the country, the authors found that the selectiveness of a school had its own impact on the graduation rate, employment, earnings,

civic participation, and overall satisfaction of minority students *holding constant the initial test scores and grades presented on these students' applications*.³⁹ Students did better at more selective schools, whether or not they had scores or grades in line with the school's average acceptances. Minority students took harder classes and achieved higher grades in more selective colleges, even when the gaps between their application scores and those of whites were highest. The authors attribute much of this dynamic to the informal learning that happens in diverse settings, as articulated by the adage that “people do not learn very much when they are surrounded only by the likes of themselves.”

There are major implications of applying these conclusions to current CUNY trends. Black and Latino students will succeed in stronger college environments; the more we limit their opportunities at top schools and increase their enrollment in CUNY schools with the lowest performance, the more we will be replicating patterns of inequality. Our city's public system of higher education should be serving the opposite role.

We may also want to view CUNY enrollment in relation to the makeup of the system that provides its largest source of students: the New York City public schools system. Three-quarters of the students in New York City public schools are black or Latino. The college-bound student population has expanded across public high schools, with far more students taking the SAT exam. In this sense, the trends at CUNY are of particular concern, as they occur when black and Latino students are being encouraged to attend and are pursuing college at higher than ever levels.

New York City's diversity is often described as its greatest strength. As such, it should be of particular importance that our dominant public institution of higher education pays attention to the racial and ethnic mix within its colleges. CUNY represents New York City, and is the natural pathway for the city's public high school students. The student body of its colleges, even the top ones, should better reflect the diversity of the city and the public high schools.

As with all considerations of affirmative action, there is an argument to be made for the unfairness of denying opportunities to higher-achieving students of majority racial backgrounds. This is even more complicated in the CUNY context, where the white and Asian populations are diverse in and of themselves, and have high shares of working class, first-generation, and immigrant young people, many of them from Eastern Europe, South Asia, and China.

How Does CUNY Diversity Compare?

It is difficult to compare the levels of diversity at CUNY to those of other colleges or university systems. No other system of so many schools represents a single city, nor do other cities or states have the levels of ethnic diversity that New York City does. However, this accompanying table examines the student populations at the top two CUNY schools next to those of top schools at the State University of New York (SUNY), and Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

2010 Freshman Race/Ethnicity at Top Regional Public Colleges

	Asian	Black	Latino	White	Black Pop Share*	Latino Pop Share*	Black Ratio**	Latino Ratio**
CUNY – Baruch and Hunter	40%	8%	15%	35%	30%	34%	.3	.5
SUNY - Albany*** and Binghamton	13%	9%	13%	65%	18%	20%	.5	.7
Rutgers – Newark and New Brunswick	29%	9%	20%	41%	15%	21%	.6	1.0

*The shares of black and Latino youth of the broader population of 18 year olds in the city (for CUNY) and states (for SUNY and Rutgers) from which the colleges generally recruit.

**Black/Latino ratio is the percentage of blacks/Latinos at each school divided the percentage of black/Latino 18 year-olds in that city/state.

*** SUNY's Stony Brook and Buffalo campuses (tied for #54) are ranked slightly higher than Albany (#69) in national rankings, but we were unable to obtain 2010 freshman enrollment data for those schools.

Compared to CUNY, the top schools at other major public university systems in New York and New Jersey have black and Latino populations that are more reflective of the region they represent (New York State and New Jersey for SUNY and Rutgers, New York City for CUNY). As shown in the table, while the share of black students in each system is relatively equal, the ratio of black freshman to the share of black 18 year-olds in the city or state they are located is quite different. In the top two CUNY schools, Baruch and Hunter, eight percent of freshman are black, compared to 30 percent of 18 year-olds in New York City. At SUNY Albany and SUNY Binghamton, nine percent of freshmen are black, but with New York State's population being twenty percent black, their ratio of black students to black population is significantly higher. At Rutgers' Newark and New Brunswick campuses, nine percent of freshmen are black, while fifteen percent of New Jersey's 18 year-old population is black, giving them a higher ratio than CUNY and SUNY.

The share of Latino students within these university systems varies greatly, as does the degree to which they represent the Latino populations in the city or state in which they are located. But, as in the case of blacks, the ratio of Latino students at Baruch and Hunter is considerably lower than it is at the SUNY and Rutgers schools, whose 2010 freshman student bodies better reflect the broader populations of the areas they represent.

A Brief Summary of the Affirmative Action Legal and Policy Debate

As we think about whether and how CUNY might address these concerns, it is important to consider the history and current debate surrounding affirmative action in colleges and universities.

Affirmative Action in the Courts

In 2003, two affirmative action cases involving the University of Michigan reached the Supreme Court. In *Gratz v. Bollinger*, a federal judge ruled in 2000 that the University's undergraduate program was within its rights to use race as a factor in its admission practices, stating that a diverse student body does provide educational benefits. Called as an expert witness in the case, William Bowen cited his research that affirmative action policies did not provide unfair opportunities to minority students, but rather that "an admissions policy that relied primarily on test scores would lead to the rejection of qualified minority students." In *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2001), a federal judge ruled that the law school's affirmative action policy was unconstitutional. That ruling was appealed and overturned in 2002. The Supreme Court upheld the appeal saying that race can be a factor in selecting students because there is a compelling state interest in having a diverse student body. The Court did, however, rule that the University's undergraduate admissions program, which used a point system where minority applicants are given extra points, had to be modified.

Very recently, the Supreme Court has agreed to take up *Fisher vs. University of Texas*, a case which challenges the *Grutter vs. Bollinger* decision allowing race to be used in application decision-making. The court expects to hear arguments in the fall of 2012.⁴⁰

Federal Department of Education Directives

In 2008, at the end of the George W. Bush administration, the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights issued a letter providing guidance to postsecondary education institutions on how they could use race in their admissions processes. The letter regards racial classifications as being of "a highly suspect nature" and would only be permitted when there is "the most exact connection between justification and classification."⁴¹ The letter also states that before using race as a means to achieve diversity, there must be a consideration of race-neutral alternatives and that there should be periodical reviews of how race is being used and a logical endpoint for the use of race as a factor in the admissions process. This

guidance seemed to build off that administration's support of the "Texas 10% Rule." Passed in 1997, the state law guarantees admission to all public state universities for students who graduate in the top ten percent of their class, with some additional "backfilling" of school capacity using race more explicitly. Critics of the Texas plan, including Bowen, argue that it penalizes minority applicants from better high schools, who do not make it into the top ten percent of their class.⁴² Indeed, one study has shown that the policy incentivizes students to transfer to low-performing high schools just before they apply to college.⁴³

In 2011, the Obama administration's Department of Education Office of Civil Rights issued its own guidance on the use of race in post-secondary education admissions, in which it points to the benefits of a diverse learning environment. The new directive states that interacting with students of different backgrounds is a value in and of itself, and that it should be part of a university's mission to open up opportunities to all segments of society.⁴⁴ The letter advocates use of race-neutral criteria that would ostensibly have an impact on racial diversity, but explicitly states that race can be used as one of the factors in application decisions and recruitment activities.

California and Affirmative Action

In California, post-secondary institutions were forced to deal with state-level restrictions in affirmative action even before the Supreme Court's 2003 decision. In 1996, voters passed Proposition 209, which banned affirmative action in all public institutions, including institutions of higher education, after which the numbers of black and Latino students in senior colleges and graduate schools dropped precipitously. In an effort to adjust in 2002, the University of California began using "comprehensive review" in their admissions process, and began to look at a broad range of personal and academic characteristics, as well as the context in which applicants achieved.⁴⁵ In 2009, a paper published at the University of California-Berkeley showed that substituting low-income status for race did not lead to the enrollment of more under-represented minorities, and that other methods would have to be considered.⁴⁶ This supported the findings of Bowen and Bok, who also argued against using income as a proxy for racial and ethnic diversity, citing data that low-income whites perform better in high school than low-income minorities.

Recommendations: what should be done to address the fact that an unintended consequence of increased demand for CUNY has been a steep drop in opportunities for black and Latino students at more selective schools?

CUNY and the New York City Department of Education should act to address the rapid decrease in black and Latino students at top CUNY colleges. Previously, we presented the challenge of this work as one of preparation and opportunity. Our recommendations for how to address the findings of this report are presented along these same lines.

Preparation: what can be done to improve the ability of black and Latino applicants to compete with other CUNY applicants?

The most straightforward solution to increasing diversity at top CUNY schools would be to graduate more high scoring black and Latino students from New York City public high schools. We defer to the knowledge and experience of those practitioners and policymakers actively working in the field of college readiness. In his report on the subject, former CUNY administrator John Garvey makes a series of recommendations that we echo, including expanded investments in the programs outlined in the previous section, as well as:

- **Better aligned standards and assessments**, particularly reform of the Regents examinations to align them with college placement tests and what we know students need to be successful in college.
- **Enhanced college advisement**, to ensure that all students and their families have the best possible information about college readiness and the transition to college, from as early an age as possible.
- **Higher quality teaching and learning** within the New York City public high schools to promote better student achievement. This would include accelerated learning opportunities that incorporate college-level work within the high school experience.
- **Development of a stronger college readiness system** that includes data analysis and ongoing discussion among a wide range of stakeholders of how to improve college transitions.

Opportunity: what can CUNY do to promote greater access and success for black and Latino enrollees?

The achievement gap between white and Asian compared to black and Latino high school students has persisted for years, and will not disappear in the very short term, despite our laudable efforts, including the recent Bloomberg initiative to better track the outcomes of youth of color in high school accountability metrics. As the data shows us, other recent, powerful trends in the labor market and changes in CUNY requirements have exacerbated inequalities in college enrollment across races and ethnicities. CUNY should act in the short term to promote access for black and Latino students at all its colleges. Recent enrollment data suggests that it may be time for CUNY to consider a program of affirmative action and/or non-race based alternatives that will increase racial diversity and more closely reflect New York City's demographics within the top levels of the city's public university system.

Recent Supreme Court rulings leave room for interpretation as to the extent and manner in which affirmative action can be used in public universities, although these issues will soon be brought in front of the court again. According to *The New York Times*, the latest lawsuits' attempts "to eliminate efforts to ensure diversity on campuses are squarely at odds with America's racial history."⁴⁷ Rather than waiting to see the outcomes of these cases, CUNY should act now, and undertake a serious examination of how it can provide more opportunities for underrepresented minorities, especially during recessions. At the same time as it seeks to admit more black and Latino students across its senior colleges, CUNY should invest in ways to support the success of those students once they are enrolled.

CUNY should aim for its universities to reasonably approximate the demographic makeup of New York City. Thirty percent of New York City's 18-year-olds are black and 34 percent are Latino.⁴⁸ New York City Department of Education statistics show that of students who graduated after four years of high school in 2010, 31 percent were black and 34 percent were Latino.⁴⁹ Yet, at CUNY's top-tier senior colleges, blacks and Latinos were just 10 and 19 percent of 2010 freshman enrollees. The figures for senior colleges overall are more representative of the city's demographics (22.5 percent and 25.2 percent), but the downward trend from 2008 (24.9 percent and 28.2 percent), precisely when black

Rather than waiting to see the outcomes of pending affirmative action cases, CUNY should act now, and undertake a serious examination of how it can provide more opportunities for underrepresented minorities, especially during recessions.

and Latino young people are having the greatest difficulties in the labor market, is a cause for major concern.

In order to strive for a better demographic representation at CUNY, the university should actively manage enrollment to place more black and Latino students in its top- and second-tier senior colleges. CUNY should engage in a major, systematic effort to examine how to promote diversity in its senior colleges without sacrificing their quality. This should include an investigation of practices from colleges across the country, and discussions with leading experts in the field. This effort will require a significant investment of resources on CUNY's part.

We also propose four more immediate steps for CUNY:

1. Expand outreach efforts in New York City public high schools. This must include closer relationships with poor districts that are majority black and/or Latino. The SEEK/CD program is a great way to ensure that these students have the resources they need once they are accepted. But CUNY must also seek out these students well before the application process begins and encourage them to apply. CUNY must also expand on its efforts to ensure that black and Latino high school graduates are college ready.

2. Adopt a more comprehensive application review process throughout the senior colleges. From the data and information that we were able to gather, the top schools at CUNY are accepting students in direct correlation with the SAT and GPA scores in their applications. Following the example of the University of California, CUNY should consider taking a more comprehensive review of its applicants when making admissions decisions. Grade point average and SAT scores are the primary measures that CUNY takes into consideration when looking at applicants. In recent years, all of CUNY's four-year colleges have raised their minimum score requirements. According to an admissions counselor, items such as personal essays and letters of recommendation can also be taken into consideration, and ostensibly propel a student with subpar scores into consideration, but the common CUNY application for general admission does not request recommendations or an essay.

Given the population it serves, CUNY should give greater consideration to the backgrounds of their applicants and use that as a consideration for admission. Applicants' race, ethnicity, ancestry, neighborhood of

residence, socio-economic status, family composition, and parents' educational attainment are other factors that should be considered when assessing applications. The environment in which a student learns is clearly a factor in that student's level of achievement, and students who excel in schools, districts, and communities that do not typically generate as many college-going graduates should be given extra consideration, even if their scores do not match those of applicants who achieved in more traditional settings.

3. Reinstitute the summer program of conditional admissions.

According to comments we received from CUNY, until 2008, the colleges had long offered students who did not meet minimum requirements the chance to build their skills during the summer in immersion classes. Applicants who reached proficiency levels during the summer became eligible for admission at schools they would not have been accepted to initially. This policy of "conditional admissions" was discontinued at many of the senior colleges, eliminating the opportunity for many students who were not initially proficient enough to qualify. This policy change, which happened at the same time as an increase in minimum SAT score requirements at various senior colleges and the increase in applications overall, had a direct negative impact on the enrollment of black and Latino students.

4. Engage external organizations in programs to support the enrollment, retention, and success of black and Latino students with lower test scores. As more black and Latino students enroll, CUNY should invest more in programs to ensure that they succeed. The idea that CUNY's senior colleges can either have higher graduation rates or more black and Latino students is a false choice. CUNY schools should consider following the model of the Posse Foundation, which works with students who would not have been admitted into elite schools under standard criteria by organizing them into supportive cohorts and providing direct assistance before and during college. Posse students have SAT scores that are significantly below the averages for the schools they attend, but perform exceptionally well.⁵⁰ The Youth Development Institute in New York City has also published work to support the idea that young people from poor communities can achieve in college with rigorous support from community-based organizations (CBOs), who can take advantage of strong connections and strong commitments to non-

Endnotes

traditional college students who might otherwise have difficulty navigating higher education environments.⁵¹ Another model for this work might come from innovations in the New York City public high schools. The Learning to Work (LTW) program has shown strong successes with students who were not successful in their initial high school experiences. The LTW model provides resources to CBOs that offer social supports, internships, and otherwise help students stay engaged in school, with a specific focus on graduation and postsecondary success. This type of work will require resources, and CUNY should receive additional support from the city to conduct it.

If students with lower scores are given significant support to succeed after they enroll, there is reason to believe they can be successful. The question for CUNY is if it is willing to invest in these students, and whether it can put aside its aspirations for higher rankings—which are in part based on SAT scores—for a greater good.

A more racially and ethnically diverse environment across CUNY senior colleges will benefit all students at those schools. The Obama administration has articulated the “compelling interest that postsecondary institutions have in obtaining the benefits that flow from achieving a diverse student body.” Nowhere is this truer than in New York City, which is defined by the resources and experiences of its diverse population. CUNY must represent the primary pathway to mitigate the inequality that unfortunately plagues our city. We can balance access and excellence at our best schools, but it will require effort and investment.

The New York City Department of Education, CUNY, and other organizations in the city need to work together to make sure that black and Latino students can compete with their peers for placement in the CUNY senior colleges. Yet we have seen that preparation efforts, particularly in a difficult labor market, will not be enough to maintain diversity. CUNY should find ways to ensure that its senior colleges can enroll a more representative balance of students in its top schools. Short-term labor market shifts, which have had the greatest negative effect on black and Latino youth employment, should not impact them doubly.

¹ We are also grateful to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for their support of this project.

² We are grateful to David Crook, University Dean for Institutional Research and Assessment, and his colleagues at the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) for providing us with the data for this project. We also learned a great deal from a meeting with James Murphy, Associate Dean for Enrollment for CUNY. We owe another debt of gratitude to John Mogulescu, Senior University Dean for Academic Affairs and Dean of the School of Professional Studies, for facilitating our work with OIRA. The openness and cooperation of these CUNY staff members speaks strongly about their and the institution’s interest in reflection, assessment, and continuous improvement.

³ National Center for Education Statistics. “Fast Facts.” <http://nces.ed.gov/fast-facts/display.asp?id=98>

⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics. “Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 25 years and over by educational attainment, sex, race, and Latino or Latino ethnicity.” www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat7.pdf

⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics. “Employment Projections: Education Pays...” http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm

⁶ College Board Policy and Advocacy Center. “Education Pays 2010.” www.labor.ny.gov/stats/PDFs/Why_Go_to_School.pdf

⁷ National Center for Education Statistics. “Fast Facts.” nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ New York City Department of Education. “SAT Performance and Participation: 2002-2010.” 2011.

¹⁰ National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. “National Postsecondary Enrollment Trends Before, During, and After the Great Recession.” July 2011. www.studentclearinghouse.info/signature/1/NSC_Signature_Report_1.pdf

¹¹ Mitchell, Russ. “Recession Alters College Admissions Process.” CBS News. April 6, 2009. www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/04/05/eveningnews/main4920481.shtml

¹² College Board. “Effects of the Recession on College Plans.” <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/data-reports-research/trends/studentpoll/recession>

¹³ The costs of attending CUNY are outlined on its website (<http://www.cuny.edu/admissions/financial-aid/estimating-costs/college-costs-overview.html>). It should be noted that over half of CUNY undergraduates in 2010 received federal financial aid in the form of need-based Pell Grants or the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).

¹⁴ Lisa Foderaro, “CUNY Imposes Cutoff for Freshmen Applications.” *The New York Times*. May 5, 2010. www.cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/05/05/cuny-imposes-cut-off-date-for-freshmen-applications/

¹⁵ Jeff Wilkins and Rachel Monahan, “Hard Times = Good Times at CUNY: Applications Soar by 12% at Brooklyn’s Public Colleges.” *The Daily News*. April 14, 2009. www.nydailynews.com/new-york/brooklyn/hard-times-good-times-cuny-applications-soar-12-brooklyn-public-colleges-article-1.360616

¹⁶ The data we received was provided in separate tables for each above-mentioned variable; as such, we were unable to run cross-tabulations or conduct other analyses across variables. The information we were able to obtain about application trends was from a review of media publications.

¹⁷ These distinctions were first described to the lead author by James Murphy, Associate Dean for Enrollment, August 9, 2011. Although there is little formal recognition of these tiers, there are multiple materials and communications from CUNY staff and faculty that reference them. The 2008-2012 CUNY Master Plan, produced in June 2008, refers to a deliberate effort on the part of CUNY to develop tiers among the colleges: “A renewed focus on the University as an integrated system began with restructured admission policies. The system was tiered, allowing for multiple points of entry.” http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/chancellor/mater-plan_08_12.pdf. In other informal but public communications, CUNY staff and faculty refer to the tiers. These include a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* by a CUNY professor (<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/26/opinion/l-master-plan-at-cuny-446491.html>), and the testimony of a CUNY executive in response to the 2000 CUNY Master Plan that seems to have established the tiering system (<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/26/opinion/l-master-plan-at-cuny-446491.html>).

¹⁸ Several of these colleges, including Medgar Evers, NYCCT, and College of Staten Island, offer associate degree programs, as well as baccalaureate degrees.

¹⁹ The Mayor’s Advisory Task Force on the City University, “CUNY: An Institution Adrift,” June 1999.

²⁰ Karen Arenson, “City Task Force Report, Giuliani Seems to Soften His Position on CUNY.” *The New York Times*, June 8, 1999. <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/06/08/nyregion/citing-task-force-report-giuliani-seems-to-soften-his-position-on-cuny.html?pagewanted=2&src=pm>

²¹ City Task Force Report, Executive Summary, p.3. http://www.nyc.gov/html/records/rwg/cuny/pdf/exec_sum.pdf

²² CUNY website: <http://www.cuny.edu/admissions/undergraduate/prepare/prospectivfreshmen.html>

²³ Murphy interview.

²⁴ All CUNY enrollment statistics cited in this report comes from the data provided to us by David Crook, University Dean for Institutional Research and Assessment, and his colleagues at the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

²⁵ David Crook, University Dean for Institutional Research and Assessment. This comment was sent to the authors in a response to an early draft of this report.

²⁶ Murphy interview.

²⁷ Sharon Otterman, “City’s SAT Scores Bounce Back After Losses in 2009.” *The New York Times*, September 14, 2010. <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/09/14/citys-sat-scores-bounce-back-after-losses-in-2009/>

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²⁸ Analysis of data by CAA score is complicated by the fact that the nature of CUNY's CAA data has changed somewhat in recent years. Between 2008 and 2010, CUNY accepted fewer students with unrecorded CAA data (34% to 14%), as it discouraged students applying in person at a specific college (a process in which CAA scores were not recorded), as opposed to applying through CUNY central (for which scores are recorded). As such, it is possible that the changes we see in CAA data are related to this dynamic. However, since the CAA trends strongly align with SAT score data, for which there are no such concerns, we are not inclined to discard them. Further, we have yet to develop a strong hypothesis for why students with previously unrecorded scores would have systematically higher CAAs than students who followed more formal admissions mechanisms leading to their CAA scores being recorded (and would thus counter our current findings). We think it more likely that students who traditionally applied through central office and multiple schools (perhaps including senior colleges) would actually have higher scores. Data for John Jay College has been removed from this analysis, because the school, in 2008, dropped its Associates Degree program, a dynamic that affects the changes in its CAA score averages.

²⁹ Again, it is important to note the limitations of the data on which this analysis has been conducted. We have not been able to access data about CUNY applications, and do not know how the scores of CUNY applicants may have changed. However, the average SAT scores of New York City public high school students, who make up the large majority of CUNY enrollees, have not, on average, improved.

³⁰ New York City Department of Education. "SAT Performance and Participation, 2011."

³¹ The strongest way to confirm this finding would be through an analysis of application data, which we have not been able to obtain from CUNY.

³² In 2009, for instance, Brooklyn College raised its minimum SAT score to 1000; however, 22 percent of the freshman class that entered in 2010 had SAT scores below 1000.

³³ Tom Hilliard, "Mobility Makers," Center for an Urban Future, 2011.

³⁴ We recognize that there is additional information that would allow us to solidify the hypotheses described above. Although CUNY has provided us with a significant amount of data, obtaining and examining application data—which we requested, but were not provided—would make findings of this report more robust. It would be useful to examine data about application trends not just overall, but in terms of acceptances and rejections among specific sub-groups of applicants. This information would help us better understand how changes in demand for CUNY (and specific schools within the system) relate to actual enrollment.

³⁵ John Garvey, "Are New York City's Public Schools Preparing Students for Success in College?" Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. 2009.

³⁶ These include: state-level efforts to better align the New York State Regents exams to college-level placement exams and work; programs within the NYCDOE, such as Career and Technical Education (CTE), and the recent efforts as part of the Young Men's Initiative to better track black and Latino student performance; collaborative efforts between the NYCDOE and CUNY, such as GraduateNYC! College Readiness and Success Initiative; CUNY programs such as College Now, the Early College High School Initiative, SEEK, At Home in College, Middle Grades Initiative/GEAR UP; and college readiness programs run by other organizations such as the College Consortium of New York, College Summit, New Visions for Public Schools, Urban Assembly, the Partnership for Afterschool Education, Young Women's Leadership Foundation, and Student Success Centers.

³⁷ Mayoral Task Force Report, Executive Summary, p. 3.
http://www.nyc.gov/html/records/rwg/cuny/pdf/exec_sum.pdf

³⁸ Michelle Holder, "Unemployment in New York City During the Recession and Early Recovery," Community Service Society, December 2010.

³⁹ William G. Bowen and Derek Bok, *The Shape of the River: Long Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*. Princeton University Press, 1998.

⁴⁰ Adam Liptak, "Justices Take Up Race as a Factor in College Entry." *The New York Times*, February 21, 2012.

⁴¹ US Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights. "OCR Guidance: The Use of Race in Post Secondary Student Admissions." 2008.

⁴² Bowen and Bok.

⁴³ Julie Berry Cullen, Mark C. Long, and Randall Reback, 2010. "Jockeying for position: strategic high school choice under Texas' top ten percent plan," NBER Working Paper No. 16663.

⁴⁴ US Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights. "Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity in Post Secondary Education." 2011.

⁴⁵ Measures within the comprehensive review included: identification as "Eligible in the Local Context" by ranking in the top four percent of the high school class; academic accomplishments in light of an applicant's life experiences and special circumstances, such as disabilities, low family income, first generation to attend college, need to work, disadvantaged social or educational environment, difficult personal and family situations or circumstances; and location of the applicant's secondary school and residence.

⁴⁶ Richard Atkinson and Patricia Pelfrey. "Rethinking Admissions: US Public Universities in the Post Affirmative Action Age." October 2004.

⁴⁷ "The Affirmative Action War Goes On." *The New York Times*, January 21, 2012.

⁴⁸ Analysis of 2008-2010 American Community Survey Data

⁴⁹ New York City Department of Education. "Cohorts of 2001 Through 2006 (Classes of 2005-2010) Graduation Outcomes." Available at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/GraduationDropoutReports/default.htm>

⁵⁰ Tina Rosenberg, "Beyond SATs, Finding Success in Numbers." *The New York Times*, February 15, 2012. <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/15/beyond-sats-finding-success-in-numbers/>

⁵¹ John Garvey, "Toward a New Model of Success for Disconnected Youth: CBO--Community College Partnerships." Youth Development Institute, 2010.

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