

Towards a New Model of Success for Disconnected Youth:

CBO-COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS



YDI

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



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Established in 1991 in New York City, the Youth Development Institute (YDI) is one of a growing number of intermediary organizations throughout the United States that seek to create a cohesive community infrastructure to support the positive development of youth. YDI approaches its work with an understanding of and a respect for the complexities of young people's lives and the critical role of youth-serving organizations in supporting young people's growth and development.

YDI's mission is to increase the capacity of communities to support the development of young people. YDI provides technical assistance, conducts research, and assists policy-makers in developing more effective approaches to support and offer opportunities to young people. At the core of YDI's work is a research-based approach to youth development. This work is asset-based in focusing on the strengths of young people, organizations and their staff. It seeks to bring together all of the resources in the lives of young people—school, community, and family—to build coherent and positive environments. The youth development framework identifies five principles that have been found to be present when youth, especially those with significant obstacles in their lives, achieve successful adulthood:

- [Close relationships with adults](#)
- [High expectations](#)
- [Engaging activities](#)
- [Opportunities for contribution](#)
- [Continuity of adult supports over time](#)

The Youth Development Institute (YDI) also strengthens non-profit organizations and public agencies and builds programs that address gaps in services, in New York City and nationally. It provides training and on-site technical assistance, conducts research, develops practice and policy innovations, and supports advocacy. This work enables organizations and agencies to apply the most promising lessons from research and practice so that they operate efficiently and the young

people they serve grow and develop through powerful, sustained, and joyful experiences. YDI helps organizations to design their programs based on sound knowledge about what works and provides their leaders and staff with the information and skills to implement these strategies effectively. YDI addresses gaps in youth services by developing new programs and policies in areas and for populations that are addressed inadequately.

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Preface

PREFACE

The need for a more powerful and effective model for the education of disconnected youth has been evident for some time. It has been made more urgent by the impact of the economic crisis on young people in general and disconnected youth in particular. If effective programs are not developed and implemented, the already precarious circumstances of those young people will become substantially worse and the communities they live in will become worse off as well. This report describes the problem and outlines an approach that can potentially help prepare these youth to succeed in meeting the responsibilities and enjoying the opportunities of adult life in the 21st century. This approach involves long-term and deep partnerships between community-based organizations (CBOs) and community colleges. Michael Chavez Reilly's (2008) research on these developing partnerships has revealed some of their promise.

This report both builds on the lessons of this early work and extends them based on data from the City University of New York and other sources. With adequate support, these partnerships can offer a better and more secure route to adulthood for these youth, one that offers the promise of both relative economic security and rich, engaged life experiences. This report was prepared after a review of relevant data and research findings, visits to community organizations participating in the Youth Development Institute's Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS) initiative, conversations with several youth participants at those programs, and consultations with staff at the Youth Development Institute.

To arrive at a description of a new, more powerful, model, the report will first review the major challenges:

- the labor market;
- postsecondary education outcomes
- factors contributing to high rates of college failure;
- a profile of disconnected youth.

Second, it will describe why a community-based organization—community college partnership could serve as a powerful model for enabling these youth to transition successfully into college and obtain a diploma or certificate in an area of expanding employment opportunities. Third, it will describe the essential elements of new pathways to college for disconnected youth. Fourth, it will describe the essential aspects of a partnership model. And, finally, it will discuss some of the capacity building work that will be necessary to move this idea forward.

The Challenges

THE CHALLENGES

The circumstances of disconnected older adolescents and young adults have been made far more difficult by the ongoing worsening of most labor markets. In a report issued on April 7, 2009, the Economic Policy Institute concluded that the total number of officially unemployed workers nationally in February was 12.5 million and that there were 9.5 million more job seekers than available jobs or 4.1 people without work for each possible job. Heidi Shierholz (2009) at the EPI found that “by comparison, at the start of the recession there were 1.7 unemployed workers per job opening.” As the number of jobs drops, the number of individuals with better skills and more experience who are seeking work increases. As a result, the number of opportunities for those with limited skills and little experience sharply contract.

This difficult situation is made dire by the recent and continuing trend that results in fewer young workers being employed in comparison to older workers. According to Andrew Sum and his colleagues (2008), as of December 2008, “the nation’s teens and young adults failed to secure any net gain in employment over the 2000-2007 period and were the largest net losers of jobs from the labor market downturn over the past 12 months.” More specifically, while the average Employment/Population Ratio for 16-19 year olds in 2000 was 45.2%, the rate for that same group in October/November 2008 was 31.0%, a decline of 14.2%. Individuals between the ages of 20-24 were apparently less adversely affected; in 2000, the employment/population ratio for that group was 72.3%; in October/November 2008, it was down to 66.0%. At the same time, while the average ratio in the year 2000 for individuals between 55 and 64 was 57.8%, in October/November 2008, it had increased to 62.4%. These trends may get worse still as large numbers of individuals who had been planning on retirement instead decide to remain working because of losses in retirement-related savings and investments.¹ The challenges are made more difficult still because programs serving older adolescents and young adults have been relying on certain segments of the city’s labor market to find jobs and placements. Jobs in those sectors are characterized by relatively low wages, limited benefits, and high turnover. Indeed, it is likely that the high turnover rates in those jobs are what make possible the placement of newer clients in those positions.

Therefore, it would be helpful to look beyond the immediate labor market situation and to examine longer term prospects. Unfortunately, many labor market projections mistakenly interpret evidence of anticipated job growth for various new positions by failing to take full account of the base number of jobs upon which projected growth rates are calculated. Put simply, even a very small growth rate on a large base could very well mean many more job openings than a much larger rate on a small base. While some projections do attempt to

¹ Lest we be misunderstood, a strategy to assist disconnected young people should not be associated with any efforts to exclude older workers from the labor market.

account for the impact of retirements and vacancies in existing jobs, those projections tend to rely on what might be considered a stable set of life and work patterns, such as retirement by individuals when they reach their mid-60s. As mentioned above, that normal pattern can relatively quickly become obsolete.

On the other hand, New York City has a growing population with numerous needs—for education; for disease prevention and health care; for the care of young children and the elderly; for the maintenance of complex physical infrastructures (subways, highways, bridges, tunnels, water tunnels, sewers, as well as electrical and gas distribution grids); for the preservation and expansion of recreational resources (such as parks and beaches); and for the expansion and preservation of opportunities for cultural appreciation and expression (in museums, libraries, theaters, and studios). There are many things that will need to be done in the years to come and they will require people of talent, knowledge, passion, and ethical commitment to do them well. The disconnected young people of this city should not and must not be excluded from the fullest possible participation in the future of the city.

A useful illustration of this approach to understanding labor markets can be found in CUNY's preliminary planning for a new community college conducted during 2008. The planning team (2008) decided that the new college would focus on preparing its students for careers that advance the well-being of the residents of New York City. Through an analysis of the continuing and emerging needs of the city's residents and the kinds of services that would be required to meet those needs, the CUNY group developed recommendations for programs of study that would match needs and services. The recommended programs included those in nursing and allied health care; urban studies and urban education; earth sciences and environmental technologies; information technologies, etc. In most cases, the planning team chose to emphasize the need for students to acquire broad skills rather than to narrowly prepare for an existing job opportunity.

While it is necessary to remain alert to the emergence of genuine short to mid-term opportunities and to take advantage of them, it seems likely that the most effective approach to the labor market for our purposes will be to preserve and expand options for young people for a broad range of life opportunities.² In light of the far-reaching changes in the labor market, young people need to acquire as

2 Such a preservation and expansion includes enhanced skill and knowledge but also requires thoughtful attention to ensuring that young people remain relatively unaffected by the dangers of substance abuse, criminal activity, imprisonment and infectious diseases. While an essential aspect of this work involves effective counseling and case management services for individual young people, it also requires attention to the more or less routine functioning of institutions that result in the profoundly disproportionate rates of life-threatening illnesses and involvement with the criminal justice system. See, for example, the "School to Prison Pipeline Mapping for Action Project Concept Paper." <http://www.annenberginstitute.org/CIP/papers/school-to-prison-pipeline.pdf>. Retrieved on May 15, 2009.

much skill versatility as possible—so that they can be prepared for many different possibilities or challenges. Skills include academic, technical, social, and civic dimensions. And, as discussed by the National Research Council (2008), versatility includes the ability to use prior experiences and knowledge to adapt to a variety of challenges and opportunities. By way of example, versatility in a work setting could, among many other things, include: keeping track of what work needs to be done, assessing the difference between what's important and what's not, setting priorities, adapting to changes in policies or procedures, and assessing the effectiveness of actions. Skill versatility alone will not guarantee success. But a lack of versatility will all but certainly limit the possibility of success as well as the ability to overcome challenges.

Postsecondary Education Outcomes

As we will elaborate below, postsecondary education is the primary vehicle available for people to expand their knowledge and strengthen their skills. However, the rates of college completion are distressingly low. See Box I.

BOX I: COLLEGE SUCCESS RATES

According to the City University of New York's (CUNY) Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (2008), the most recent system-level six-year graduation rates for all full-time freshmen enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs at CUNY (students who began in 2002) were 3.4% for associate degrees and 47.6% for baccalaureate degrees. An additional 10.1% were still enrolled. The comparable six-year graduation rates for all full-time freshmen enrolled in associate degree programs were 17.7% for associate degrees and 11.0% for baccalaureate degrees. An additional 8.2% were still enrolled. These figures are not so different from the national ones. Thomas Bailey (2007), from the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, has summarized the situation at community colleges across the country:

Despite the importance of community colleges and the best intentions and hard work of their faculty and staff members, we are failing these students in profound ways. A majority of incoming students expect to earn a bachelor's degree but only 18 percent obtain one within eight years of enrolling. Some 15 percent earn an associate degree. Many fail to make it through their first year, much less reap the benefits of programs that help them take advantage of new opportunities in the global economy. The facts are hardly revelations to those who study and work in the institutions.

While the prospects for degree completion for all students enrolled at community colleges are not encouraging, they are far more discouraging for students who need to take remedial courses. According to CUNY data, for students who entered associate degree programs in fall 2001, the overall graduation rates for students by basic skills proficiency status were as follows:

Proficiency Status	Graduation Rate within Six Years
Not Proficient in Any Area	15.7%
Proficient in One Area	21.1%
Proficient in Two Areas	24.4%
Proficient in All Areas	33.7%
Missing One or More Tests	23.9%
Total Cohort	23.8%

While the graduation rate for those with no remedial needs is lower by far than it should be, it's nonetheless important to recognize that such students graduate at more than twice the rate of students with the most severe remedial needs.

Factors Contributing to High Rates of College Failure

In significant measure, the high rates of college failure are due to the academic under-preparedness of entering college students—high school graduates and GED recipients alike. But under-preparedness does not account for everything. The prospects of success are reduced because of the complexities and shortcomings of the college-going process, which frequently result in individuals enrolling at institutions that are not good matches for them. They end up being unprepared to navigate the somewhat strange policies and practices of a college. The individuals and organizations that provide college access services to prospective college students are not as knowledgeable or as effective as they need to be and college staff members are often not well-equipped to meet the real needs of the previously disconnected students they accept.

Lack of Preparedness

Far too often, the understanding of college readiness is reduced to a common sense version in which it is imagined that college readiness simply means that students don't need remedial courses. Unfortunately, in more or less the same way that meeting high school graduation requirements does not signal readiness for college, neither does passing the most typical college placement tests (Achieve, 2007). Being ready for college is a far more complex matter. A recent report by David Conley (2007) has described the essential elements of college readiness.

- *Key habits of mind that enable students to learn content from a range of disciplines.* Well-prepared students should be able to reach a conclusion, follow the logic of an argument, document a finding, postulate an explanation for an observed phenomenon, solve a non-routine problem, and interpret seemingly contradictory information regarding an event.
- *Academic knowledge and skills.* Well-prepared students should be able to write effectively and efficiently in different modes and conduct research and synthesize findings. Well-prepared students should have what might be considered core knowledge in English, Math, Science, Social Studies, World Language, and the Arts.
- *Academic behaviors.* Well-prepared students should have self-management skills that include characteristics such as time management, awareness of one's actual skill level, task prioritizing, study skills including using study groups, and the ability to take the initiative to do more than the minimum that is specified.
- *Contextual skills.* Well-prepared students should know how colleges operate; that postsecondary institutions are communities of scholars focused on ways of knowing and that the best way to connect with this community is to develop interests in ideas, concepts, and important questions. Well-prepared students should also have “college knowledge,” which consists of

knowing how to apply to college, access financial aid, and utilize a range of special services available to students that help them remain in school when struggling. (pp. 9-14)

Conley's enumeration makes clear that becoming ready for college is not something that one can do quickly—readiness is the result of many years of successful achievement in progressively more demanding educational experiences. Most disconnected youth have not had those kinds of experiences and it is, therefore, not surprising that they would not possess the kind of knowledge and skill they need. If we move our understanding of being ready for college away from the very limited threshold of not needing remediation to a more ambitious one, we will have to acknowledge that the extent of under-preparedness is greater and that it will take more time and effort for the young people to become genuinely ready. Given the under-preparedness of many disconnected youth, it is clear that for success they will need support not just prior to entry, but on an ongoing basis after enrollment.

Complexity of the College-Going Process

Although young people who go on to college have a wide array of opportunities in public and private institutions in the metropolitan area and beyond, it is likely that the majority will enroll at a CUNY college. CUNY includes seventeen institutions which offer undergraduate degrees. There are eight colleges which offer only baccalaureate degrees; three which offer both baccalaureate and associate degrees, and six which offer only associate degrees. Admission to the associate degree programs at nine colleges is open to any individual who possesses a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma, i.e., they are “open admissions” colleges. However, eligibility for admission to all of the baccalaureate degree programs requires evidence that an applicant does not need remediation in reading, writing and math.

However, eligibility does not guarantee admission. Individual colleges at CUNY make admissions decisions on the basis of an overall assessment of student achievement, including course-taking, grades, and standardized test scores. Each college develops an admissions index that “weights” various courses, grades, and scores. Colleges also have the option of conducting individualized reviews of applications that fall below the expected achievement levels. In addition, applicants to the CUNY Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) Program at the senior colleges do not have to meet the index required for general applicants.

Although there are restrictions on admission into baccalaureate degree programs, students who earn high school equivalency diplomas by passing the GED Tests are technically eligible for admission to all CUNY colleges. However, GED recipients will most likely enroll in associate degree programs because the bac-

calaureate degree programs require that applicants have GED scores of 3,000 or above to be admitted. Very few GED test takers score at that level; indeed, a recent report indicated that the average test score for individuals between the ages of 16 and 18 in 2006 was 2520 and the average score for those aged 19 and above was 2432(Zhang, Han, & Patterson, 2009).

According to researchers at the Consortium on Chicago School Research (Roderick, et al, 2008), the roads to colleges are filled with “potholes” and individuals are frequently not choosing as wisely as they should and are not as well-prepared for what awaits them as they need to be. This situation is made even more counter-productive for prospective college students because of the continued operation of a variety of proprietary institutions that promise students rapid success and deliver all but certain frustration—at the cost of student financial aid eligibility and, worse still, loans that need to be re-paid.

Most disconnected youth have a limited understanding of what’s involved in qualifying for college; applying for admission and financial aid; making a good choice of a college to attend; and acclimating themselves to the college environment. Therefore, they are deeply dependent on the quality of the advice and support they receive. For example, during the preparation of this report, the author had an opportunity to interview several young people who were participating in a variety of education and training programs conducted by community organizations in different neighborhoods of the city and with program staff responsible for college counseling services. One young man who had completed a pre-apprenticeship program and was on the verge of becoming an apprentice in a buildings trade said that he also wanted to enroll in college. When asked about his likely college of enrollment, he responded that he planned to attend a community college with a very large student body. As the conversation continued, it became clear that the reason why he thought this choice was a good one was because he had, upon passing by the college, seen many students going into the building. He knew little else about the college.

There is considerable evidence that even students in New York City’s high schools, with resources that are more substantial than CBOs possess, are not getting what they need. According to Lori Chajet and Sierra Stoneman-Bell (2008-2009, Winter):

...many low-income students blindly follow a rote college application process rather than taking control of it themselves. Without the knowledge needed to make informed choices, many end up at colleges that do not meet their needs or expectations; others, after realizing that they never fully understood their financial aid packages, are unable to make their first payment and never begin; and still others, despite their desire to attend, never complete the application process. (pp. 41-42)

College Policies & Practices

Additional challenges and difficulties face young people when they make the transition into college. These include college placement tests, registration, financial management (bill payments, student loans, and financial aid), scheduling competing demands (such as work and family obligations), understanding the expectations of faculty and monitoring progress, developing efficient study strategies, etc. By way of example of what students will encounter, let's look at placement and remediation.

All students with high school equivalency diplomas will have to take placement tests. Two of the three tests administered by CUNY (reading and math) are computer-adaptive tests. On such tests, students answer different sequences of questions depending on the level of difficulty of the questions they get right or wrong. Each student begins with an item considered to be of mid-level difficulty; if he/she gets it right, he/she gets a harder question; if he/she gets it wrong, he/she gets an easier question. And it goes on like that: right answer—harder question; wrong answer—easier question. According to the test design principles, this approach should allow for valid determinations of student skill level on the basis of a very limited number of questions. Unfortunately, as explained by Professor Jane Coffee, Professor of Mathematics, College of Staten Island (personal communication, September 2009), it is a testing situation that most entering students are unfamiliar with and there is some evidence that the measures of student knowledge and skill are not accurate reflections of what students actually know.

In addition, we need also to recognize that the college placement tests are not well-aligned with the real demands of introductory college courses. Achieve, a national non-profit education organizations, has concluded that the most commonly used placement tests do not test college-level skills. See Box II.

BOX II: COLLEGE PLACEMENT TESTS

In 2007, Achieve conducted a study to examine the most commonly used college placement tests. The two tests used by colleges in the New York area, the COMPASS, developed by the American College Testing Program (ACT), and ACCUPLACER, developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), were included. Achieve concluded that the reading tests included “less challenging passages that are more inline with the kind of reading done in middle school and early high school” (Achieve, 2007, p. 13). With regard to the math tests, they concluded: “... the algebra content assessed tends to favor pre-algebra and basic algebra over the advanced algebra concepts and skills essential for college readiness and placement into College Algebra.” Furthermore, the tests are “too narrow and do not reflect the full range of content ... college students need in a wide variety of courses” (Achieve, 2007, p. 26).

While the ACCUPLACER reading test is arguably worse than the COMPASS (the Achieve researchers were not able to determine a level of text difficulty for the passages on the ACCUPLACER test because the passages were too short.), neither of them provides any convincing evidence that those who pass, especially those who score at or just above the cut points, are ready for success in college courses. In addition, they provide no useful diagnostic information to those who want to design effective instruction. Furthermore, they effectively convey to those who take the tests a distorted illustration of what college reading looks like. Put simply, college students are not usually asked to read very short passages and to guess at what they might mean. Instead, they’re asked to read lengthy essays and books and to work through what they might mean.

At the same time, student performance on the placement tests probably does reveal significant shortcomings in student knowledge of material they should have learned many years earlier.

At most community colleges, the majority of entering students are required to take at least one developmental course and many of them fail to complete the required courses. College faculty members and researchers have long recognized a number of deep problems with the predominant approaches:

- The placement processes do not seem to do a consistently good job in placing students in or out of remedial sequences; the processes do not distinguish between the students who really only need to review things they may have forgotten as opposed to the far more common reality where students have never really learned what they should have;
- There is frequently an unrealistic expectation that students will be able to significantly enhance their skills and knowledge through participation in relatively limited periods of instruction—students in most developmental courses only attend class for between three and six hours a week;
- Students are usually assigned to separate classes in reading, writing, and math although it is evident that almost all students would benefit from an integrated approach wherein improvements in reading would lead to

improvements in writing (and vice versa) and where improvements in literacy skills would make math learning more effective;

- Many developmental courses are designed on a model which assumes that students need to focus on the “basic” skills and don’t necessarily connect those skills to meaningful content;
- Many students who pass out of the developmental courses discover that they’re not really ready for the next credit course in the sequence.

The shortcomings associated with placement and remediation are illustrative of other serious matters. As the Planning Team authors of the concept paper for a new community college at CUNY (2008) concluded:

The structures typically in place to help community college students succeed academically and personally do not appear to be adequate for the success of the majority of community college students. The separation of student services from classroom learning, the stratified approach to remediation outside the interesting work of disciplines, and the introductory course requirements across multiple departments create an environment of disconnect that works against student success. In these institutions, students often experience college, especially a commuter college, as a jigsaw puzzle of discrete courses, services, and administrative obligations. (p. 17)

Profile of Disconnected Youth

For our purposes, a young person will be considered disconnected if he or she is either not in school or not working. This would therefore include some young people who had graduated from high school and perhaps even attended college but who are either not working or are no longer enrolled.

While it is tempting to dwell on the ways in which disconnected youth are limited by their lack of skills and knowledge, a more complex portrait of their somewhat characteristic strengths and weaknesses is needed. Disconnected young people have frequently managed to withstand more than their fair share of life’s difficulties (Wyckoff, Cooney, Djakovic, & McClanahan, 2009). They have had little to no money or powerful connections. They have probably seen too many of their friends and family members come to sad or tragic ends (including imprisonment and premature death). Nonetheless, they still keep coming back—back to schools and programs to resume their educations, back to efforts to get their lives together, back to planning for the future.

Since most disconnected youth did not graduate from high school, it would be helpful to explore what is known about the size of the dropout population and their characteristics. See Box III.

BOX III: NYC DROPOUTS

According to the most recent data available from the New York City Department of Education Office of Accountability (2008), 13.8% (or 9,753 students) of the Class of 2007 (meaning students who entered 9th grade in 2003) dropped out before their expected graduation date. Of that total, 354 did so by the end of 9th grade; 1,195 by the end of 10th grade; 2,868 by the end of 11th grade and 5,336 by the end of 12th grade. The Department also reports that an additional 24.2% (or 17,035 students) had not graduated but were still enrolled as of August 2007.

The Department reports and analyzes high school graduation and dropout data separately for students who were in self-contained Special Education classes or in schools operated by District 75. The numbers for those students are far more troubling. For the Class of 2007, less than 3% of students (43) in District 75 had obtained a diploma and less than 11% of students (496) in self-contained classes had done so as of August 2007. The dropout rates for the two groups of students were 19.6% and 16.6% respectively. Nearly three-fourths of students in the two types of Special Education environments were still enrolled.

Although data are not currently available for the graduation/dropout status of the “still enrolled” students as of the writing of this report, the eventual size of the dropout numbers can be estimated by looking at the Department of Education Research and Policy Support Group’s follow-up report on the Class of 2004’s status as of August 2007. According to that report, the total dropout rate for that class was 27.8% (17,685 students) compared to 15.5% (9,860 students) as of 2004. For special education students, the total dropout rate for students in District 75 was 38.9% (443 students) and 51.5% (2,194 students) for students in self-contained classes. Since 2004, the Department has intensified its efforts to keep potential dropouts enrolled and to provide them with an array of routes to graduation through their Multiple Pathways schools and programs. Nonetheless, it is likely that a significant number of students in the Class of 2007 who were still enrolled in 2007 have subsequently dropped out as well.

For the Class of 2003, 93% of the dropouts from the Class of 2003 Cohort had been overage and under-credited during high school. Overage and under-credited students in the Class of 2003 Cohort were at least two years off-track relative to expected age and credit accumulation toward earning a diploma. In June of 2005, 16% of the overage and under-credited high school students were designated as English Language Learners and 31% had been designated as Special Education students. At least 71% of the overage and under-credited high school students enrolled in June of 2005 had entered ninth grade with insufficient literacy skills (Cahill, Lynch, & Hamilton, 2006).³

³ It should also be noted that many thousands of young people in each Class are discharged from the schools to other school systems. There is no information available about how many of those young people eventually complete high school or remain in New York City. See Jennifer L. Jennings and Leonie Haimson, “High School Discharges Revisited: Trends in New York City’s Discharge Rates, 2000-2007.” April 30, 2009.

If, in a more or less average cohort of students in the New York City high schools (between 60,000 and 70,000), there is an eventual total dropout rate of above 25% (by the end of seven years), each year at least 15,000 new dropouts from the public schools enter the city's population. In addition, there are young people who dropped out of non-public schools and who attended school in places other than New York City.

In an encouraging development, dropout rates appear to be declining (NYCDOE Press Statement, 2009, June). It is likely that there are important lessons to be learned from the activities that the Department of Education has engaged in to increase the holding power of its schools and alternative programs.

Most students who do not graduate from high school but want to obtain a high school credential will do so by taking the Tests of General Educational Development (GED). The GED Tests are designed to evaluate if an individual has acquired the skills and knowledge associated with completing high school. In order to make that determination, the foundation for the GED testing program is the periodic reviews of the content of high school curricula and standards as well as the benchmarking of GED candidate performance against the performance of a representative group of recent high school graduates. If it's the case that simply graduating from high school does not mean that a student is ready for college, we cannot assume that simply passing the GED Tests means that a student is ready for college. See Box III for additional information on the GED Tests.

BOX IV: GED TESTS

The GED Tests are designed to measure the “major and lasting academic outcomes students normally acquired by completing a typical high school program of study.” There are five multiple choice tests and an essay test.

<i>Test Area</i>	<i>Number of Questions</i>	<i>Time Limit</i>
Language Arts, Writing, Part I	50	75 minutes
Language Arts, Writing, Part II	1 essay	45 minutes
Social Studies	50	70 minutes
Science	50	80 minutes
Language Arts, Reading	40	65 minutes
Mathematics	50	90 minutes

The GED testing program is quite thoughtful with regard to matters of test design (content specification, context setting, cognitive levels, and formats); validity and reliability studies; scoring and scaling; and standards setting. The challenge/opportunity for those wishing to design effective GED to College Programs is to take full advantage of the quality of the GED Tests. However, somewhat paradoxically, that is made more difficult because of one of the inherent virtues of the GED Tests—the setting of passing scores according to the performance of representative groups of graduating high school seniors—thereby fulfilling the promise of equivalency. In order to pass the GED Tests, the GED candidate must currently demonstrate a level of skill that meets or surpasses that of the top 60 percent of graduating high school seniors.

Put simply, the demands of the Tests and the quality of performance required for passing are fundamentally limited by the expected/actual performance of graduating high school seniors. The GED Testing Service could very well include more demanding content, more demanding items, and/or set higher passing scores but any of those decisions would jeopardize the claim to equivalency. The only way for standards on the GED Tests to be raised is for the actual achievement of high school graduates to be improved.

At the same time, the standard setting process conducted by the GEDTS provides an opportunity to explore relationships between GED test scores and degrees of college readiness.

But they do have to pass the GED Tests. What do we know about how prepared disconnected young people are to succeed on the exam in light of the standards embedded in the GED Tests? The staff at CUNY Prep, a GED/college preparatory program in the Bronx, reports that approximately 60% of the individuals who apply for admission to the program are able to score at or above an eighth grade level in reading. However, they also report that relatively few of those admitted have comparable math skills (CUNY Prep School report, 2007, June). In addition, staff members at CUNY Prep and a number of other programs acknowledge that many young people who have been out of school have considerable difficulties in acquiring and sustaining the student behaviors that are all but indispensable for academic development.

An additional perspective on the readiness of disconnected young people to meet GED standards is available from data on test-taking in the city. As seen in Table 1, 9,400 sixteen to twenty-four year olds in New York City took and passed the GED Tests in 2007.

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of GED Candidates</i>	<i>Number of Diplomas</i>	<i>Pass Rate</i>
16	126	81	64.29%
17	2,104	1,578	75.00%
18	3,212	2,077	64.66%
19	3,401	1,824	53.63%
20	2,559	1,247	48.73%
21	1,921	842	43.83%
22	1,513	679	44.88%
23	1,305	571	43.75%
24	1,141	501	43.91%
Total	17,282	9,400	54.40%

Note. From *Our Chance for Change: A Four-year Reform Initiative for GED Testing in New York City* (p. 36) by J.L. Cook, 2008, prepared for New York City Department of Youth & Community Development. Copyright 2008 by J.L. Cook. Reprinted with permission.

The number of test-takers of any given age includes individuals who took the test previously at a younger age. It's evident that, as time goes by, dropouts are less likely to take the GED Tests and less likely to pass them.

In 2006 and 2007, between 33% and 37% of all test-takers in New York City indicated that they had participated in a GED preparation program prior to taking the Tests. Individuals who did so passed the Tests at rates more than 20% higher than those who did not. Information on test-takers' knowledge and skills or length of participation is not available. Nonetheless, in light of the relatively low overall rates of passing, it seems clear that many young people are not ready to meet GED standards unless and until they have the opportunity to significantly improve their skills.

But some do pass and go on to enroll in college. Estimates of the number who enroll in some form of postsecondary education vary widely and there are no authoritative figures (Patterson, Song, & Zhang, 2009). Unfortunately, at least in the case of those enrolling at CUNY colleges, most of them do not do well. CUNY's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (2008) recently completed a study of the experiences of students who enter with equivalency diplomas. Key findings from that study are summarized in Box IV.

BOX V: GED RECIPIENTS AT CUNY

Approximately 4,000 individuals with high school equivalency diplomas enter CUNY each year as first-time freshmen in degree programs. Of GED recipients who entered CUNY over a period of five years, 27% were required to take remedial courses in reading; 67% in writing, and 71% in math.⁴ One year after entry, GED recipients had only half the rate of achieving full proficiency in those basic skills than their peers with diplomas from New York City's high schools. The report also confirmed that a clear association exists between combined GED test scores and students' chances of reaching CUNY basic skills proficiency within their first year. Those in the top quintile of GED test scores (2750 or above) are more than 7 times more likely to be proficient by the first term than those in the lowest quintile (scores of 2320 or less).

GED recipients are less likely to persist than public school graduates regardless of proficiency status or degree pursued. GED recipients start off earning fewer credits and, over time, the shortfall widens. The difference is due to fewer credits attempted (due to more remedial courses) and higher rates of part-time attendance. As a result, GED recipients earn degrees at much lower rates. For fall 2001 entrants into associate degree programs, only 12% of GED recipients earned any kind of degree or certificate within four years, as compared to 18% of public school graduates; for GED recipient entrants into baccalaureate degree programs, only 8% earned a degree as compared to 20% of public school graduates.

⁴ Of public school graduates in the same time period, 21% were required to take remedial courses in reading; 39% in writing, and 64% in math

This means that—even after young people have acquired the skills they need to prepare for the GED Tests, and after they have done well enough to pass those tests—many still find themselves not ready for success in college. We should not be surprised by this. As noted above, far too many of those who graduate from high school are not successful in earning a college credential. If those who have dropped out have been, for the most part, less successful than those who have graduated, they will usually have less developed skills than those who did graduate. However, we should not underestimate the significance of this development for the young people who are affected by it. Instead of finding themselves on the road to college success, they find themselves on the road to likely failure and profound discouragement.

CBO-Community College Partnerships

CBO-COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

The needs are great and the challenges are somewhat daunting. Nonetheless, in spite of the difficulties associated with under-preparedness, the complexity of college-going, and the limitations of many college policies and practices, there is reason to be optimistic about the possibilities of developing and implementing new partnerships between community-based organizations and community colleges that equip young people with the skills they need for self-sufficient adult lives. As we describe in this report, there is at least one promising partnership now in operation which is yielding useful lessons for a broader effort. Furthermore, community-based organizations and community colleges have long been providing services and opportunities to many of the same people—but they have been doing so in isolation from each other. Let's be more specific about why partnerships are important.

Why Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations (CBOs) provide local residents with a variety of vital services, often serving as the link between residents and the city's institutions. Many have considerable experience in providing residents with basic needs and in offering social, cultural, and educational activities.

The most effective CBOs enjoy strong relations with young people. Those strong relations are the result of deep-seated commitments on the part of agency leadership and staff to the well-being and future success of the young people they serve. Many CBOs have recognized the importance of supporting the educational achievement of young adults and provide basic education, pre-GED, and GED level classes. In fact, community-based organizations have been recipients of New York City Adult Literacy Initiative and New York State Education Department funding for literacy/ESL/GED preparation services since the mid-1980s. They have also embraced the goal of enabling young people to go on to college and have provided college counseling services as well as longer term supports to students after they enter college.

BOX VI: PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Partnership between NYC College of Technology, Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation and the Youth Development Institute

The goal of the initiative, started in 2005, is to support youth who have previously dropped out or struggled in high school to enter and complete college. The primary strategy is a partnership between the college and community organizations. The partnership is formalized in a Local Network (LN) comprising the key staff of each partner, convened and trained by YDI. The staff provides continuous academic, personal, social, and career support during the time it takes a student to complete an associate degree or attain an industry-recognized certificate, which can be 2-5 years. The LN monitors both the project as a whole and the students. At monthly meetings, data and student experience is reviewed, discussed and follow-ups planned. Common issues and themes are identified, addressed and documented for more systematic approaches—for example: better approaches to engaging students in obtaining academic supports. This information provides a basis for reviewing college and CBO policies relevant to these students.

The college provides the time of several staff as well as space and supplies for meetings, student advisement, health services, and other supports which are part of the college's standard array. Additionally, the college provides access to its tutoring, summer bridge, and other academic supports.

Once students are accepted, the CUNY Student Liaison helps students learn about the college and their options and choices, working with students and their CBO counselors until they graduate. In collaboration with the counselors, the Student Liaison streamlines the admissions and financial aid process; enrollment; registration and advisement; access to financial awards to cover tuition and fees; and tutorial support. Students are helped to determine their needs for child care, funds (for transportation, and/or books) are provided to the extent possible. College and CBO staff members help students identify and join college activities that might be of interest to them. College staff link students to mentors and college resources, including initiatives on campus that address success. From the CBO, students: participate in one-on-one counseling and case management on a biweekly basis where they review their progress in relationship to their goals; discuss challenges and achievements in their classes and personal lives; develop action plans for achieving their goals; and access college resources. Counselors reach out to family members to support and engage them on a range of college success topics; attend and organize outings and social events several times a year for the entire cohort; and research potential careers and areas of academic and career interest in order to place them in an appropriate college program.

Some students have left the college for a semester or longer. Often, this is caused by financial or other external issues. CBO counselors continue conversations with these students and ultimately, many return to continue their programs. For a full description of this partnership and related papers on college access and success for young adults, see: ydinstitute.org/resources.

All of the Community Education Pathways to Success sites that were visited during the preparation of this report are committed to creating postsecondary opportunities for participants who obtain high school equivalency diplomas.⁵ As an additional illustration of this commitment, the College Access Consortium of New York (CACNY) was established twenty years ago to bring together staff of community-based groups to strengthen the college access services provided by its members. Since then, CACNY (www.cacny.org) has provided the core training that many in-school and out-of-school programs rely on for their staff. As a result of these commitments and efforts, a renewed emphasis on a college success strategy can be built upon years of prior accomplishment.

At the same time, a new model will require significant enhancements to what is currently being done. Programs providing services to disconnected older adolescents and young adults are almost always funded through multiple funders and this frequently results in sets of inconsistent demands on program staff. The necessary balancing between the achievement of short-term (a job), mid-term (literacy advancement and GED attainment), and long-term (college entry and success; stable, full-time employment) goals is determined by the expectations of funders and the need to achieve outcomes that are all but essential for the prospect of continued funding. In addition, programs often have insufficient staff, high numbers of part-time staff, and limited professional development opportunities. These situations make it quite difficult for programs to develop a deep understanding of what would be necessary for their constituency to achieve goals related to college success and to acquire the programmatic capacity needed to make the achievement of those goals a realistic possibility.

Although the individuals who work in these areas are characterized by extraordinary dedication and hard work (and by being badly paid), instruction is rarely as good as it needs to be. For the most part, eligibility for enrollment in courses of study at different levels is determined by performance on a variety of tests. Most of those tests are designed to “sample” student achievement—by which it’s meant that student performance on a relatively small sample of items can indicate overall levels of student proficiency. Unfortunately, once such tests have been established as standard reference points, instructional practices tend to emphasize the skills needed to achieve various minimum standards on the tests. As a result, test scores increasingly reflect not what students know but what they have been practicing to get right. Not surprisingly, this leads to a situation where a student who has succeeded on one test (for example, the Test of Adult Basic Education/TABE) falls short on the next tests that he or she is required to

⁵ CEPS is program of the Youth Development Institute, currently operating in eight community organizations in NYC. Its primary purpose is to improve the capacity of CBOs to provide high quality education programs to young people who have dropped out of school with low academic skills—too low for GED prep. A 3-year external evaluation has documented its success in meeting this goal.

take (for example, the Official GED Practice Tests or the most commonly used college placement tests, the COMPASS or ACCUPLACER)—in spite of the fact that success on the earlier test implied success on the latter. While the tests usually have predictive power at a broad level, they are not sufficiently well-designed to serve as a focus of instruction.

Nonetheless, a number of CBOs are far better prepared to deliver high-quality instruction than they were even a relatively short time ago. As seen in the Campbell & Weisman (2008) final evaluation report, the Youth Development Institute's CEPS initiative has enabled a number of organizations to develop effective pre-GED instruction designed to enable participants to qualify for admission to GED-level classes. This is a welcome change from the situation that was common even a few years ago when there was almost no instruction provided for students at that level and they were either turned away or placed in GED-level classes for which they were not ready.

Programs participating in CEPS have a variety of different arrangements for the provision of GED-level instruction. This includes teachers who they hire themselves or the use of teachers employed by the New York City Department of Education who are assigned to "off-site" locations.⁶ However, the focus of GED instruction in these organizations and many others remains narrowly preoccupied with test preparation. None of the participating programs has been offering post-GED/pre-college classes. However, there are fairly powerful models available for GED and pre-college instruction, such as the work of the GED/College Transition Project at CUNY, consisting of alternatives to instruction that emphasizes narrow skill development and test preparation, which could be adapted to community-based settings.

All of the visited CEPS sites had staff assigned to provide college search and advisement services. In some cases, the staffing consisted of a single individual but, in at least one case, the college access services were provided by a team of staff at a comprehensive on-site College Center. As mentioned above, the policies, procedures, and institutional arrangements that shape what potential college students have to do in order to select a college to attend, apply for admission, and then apply for financial aid, are complicated and not very user-friendly. The individuals who provide college access services are not as consistently knowledgeable as they need to be to not only provide consistently high quality

⁶ While there are considerable challenges involved in maintaining consistent quality across a multi-site program, it is worth noting that the Department of Education has invested significant resources in promoting effective programming and providing professional development opportunities to teachers assigned to these settings. See, for example, Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation, "A Professional Learning Path to Rigorous and Relevant Instruction: Key Lessons from the Transfer School Institute," New York City Department of Education, 2009.

information and advice but also to provide that information and advice in pedagogically sound ways.

What Chajet and Stoneman-Bell (2008-2009, Winter) wrote about school approaches is also a fairly accurate description of the services provided by CBOs: “Although nationwide, schools and community-based organizations are encouraging students to apply and go to college, few institutions are confronting just how challenging the process is for low-income students who will be among the first in their families to attend.” (p. 41) After acknowledging the commitment of schools to the success of their students, they commented:

...when it comes to the college search and application process, even the best of these schools often forget what they know to be most important to teaching and learning. Rather than using student-centered, inquiry-driven, experiential approaches, they resort to telling students what they need to know and then expect them to follow the necessary steps to get into college. (p. 41)

But the most effective youth-serving organizations have embraced a set of powerful youth development principles as being essential to their work with disconnected youth. Those principles can be built upon to implement the kinds of strategies that are needed to promote college success. See Box VI.

As we have seen, far too few young people succeed in community college. Strengthened and expanded services at CBOs would of course make a difference for some individual students. But, if we want to promote significantly higher levels of college success for disconnected youth, we will have to develop a new approach—one that builds upon not only the demonstrated success of CBOs in developing and sustaining strong ongoing relationships with young people but also the demonstrated commitment of community college leaders, faculty, and staff to improve their effectiveness. A partnership approach could draw upon the strengths of both types of institutions and create powerful opportunities for reciprocal learning.

BOX VII: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & COLLEGE SUCCESS

The Youth Development Institute has utilized a study by Eric Jolly and Patricia Campbell (2008-2009, Winter) to help in structuring its work on college access and success, *The Trilogy for Student Success*. A YDI publication, *The Dream of College* (2009) describes how the ideas in this study can be applied in a program setting. The authors of that report identified “three broad conditions that must exist together in students’ lives for them to access succeed in college.” (emphasis added) Those conditions are engagement, capacity, and continuity.

Engagement

Young adults must be engaged and personally motivated to enter and succeed in college. While this may seem obvious, many schools and programs would benefit from giving more attention to:

- Cultivating students’ individual educational interests;
- Identifying their individual assets and barriers to success;
- Working with young adults to develop a personal plan and goals for their education;
- Addressing students’ hopes and fears about higher education.

Also, most young-adult learners need the encouragement of their family and friends; the commitment of financial aid, academic assistance, and other forms of support. They also need to believe that college is a safe and welcoming place before they are ready to apply for, let alone succeed in, higher education.

Capacity

In order for young adult learners to enter or succeed in college they must be able to develop certain capacities necessary to navigate the complex world of higher education. These capacities include academic content knowledge and analytical skills.

Continuity

Young-adult learners who are engaged and have the appropriate capacities still require continuity in order to enter and succeed in college. Here, continuity refers to sustained institutional and programmatic opportunities, material resources, and guidance. Schools and programs must offer quality services and information that help young adults enter and succeed in college.

Why Community Colleges

Postsecondary education is the only scalable setting available for the acquisition of substantial knowledge and the development of versatile skills by young adults. Community colleges offer students numerous opportunities for areas of study. As mentioned above, nine CUNY colleges offer associate degree programs and admit all students with high school equivalency certificates. Those colleges, located across the city, offer students a wide array of choices for areas of study—including business, computer technology, engineering, human services, liberal arts and sciences, as well as nursing and allied health. Students can complete three types of degrees—Associate in Applied Science (a terminal career-focused degree that does not lead to transfer to a baccalaureate degree program), Associate in Arts and Associate of Science (degrees that might have a career focus but definitely prepare students for transfer). In addition, there are a number of occupationally-oriented certificate programs, which require fewer than the 60 credits needed for an associate degree. It is noteworthy that Queensborough Community College and New York City College of Technology offer many more such programs than do the other colleges. Details regarding all programs of study are available on the college web sites.

Brief descriptions of each college and its programs are included in Box VIII. Additional information regarding student characteristics, retention and graduation rates is available from the United States Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) at <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>.

<i>BOX VIII: CUNY COLLEGES OFFERING ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS</i>		
College	Borough of Manhattan Community College	
Location	Downtown Manhattan	
Enrollment	Approximately 20,000	
Programs	Associate in Applied Science	13
	Associate in Arts	6
	Associate in Science	8
	Certificate	1
Web Page	www.bmcc.cuny.edu	
College	Bronx Community College	
Location	University Heights Neighborhood in the Bronx	
Enrollment	Approximately 9,000	
Programs	Associate in Applied Science	22
	Associate in Arts	2
	Associate in Science	9
	Certificate	7
Web Page	www.bcc.cuny.edu	
College	Hostos Community College	
Location	South Bronx	
Enrollment	Approximately 5,000	
Programs	Associate in Applied Science	10
	Associate in Arts	2
	Associate in Science	7
	Certificate	3
Webpage	www.hostos.cuny.edu	

<i>BOX VIII: CUNY COLLEGES OFFERING ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS (Cont.)</i>		
College	Kingsborough Community College	
Location	Manhattan Beach in Brooklyn	
Enrollment	Approximately 15,000	
Programs	Associate in Applied Science	16
	Associate in Arts	3
	Associate in Science	15
	Certificate	3
Web Page	www.kbcc.cuny.edu	
College	LaGuardia Community College	
Location	Long Island City in Queens	
Enrollment	Approximately 15,000	
Programs	Associate in Applied Science	18
	Associate in Arts	13
	Associate in Science	11
	Certificate	3
Web Page	www.lagcc.cuny.edu	
College	Queensborough Community College	
Location	Bayside in Queens	
Enrollment	Approximately 14,000	
Programs	Associate in Applied Science	13
	Associate in Arts	2
	Associate in Science	9
	Certificate	10
Webpage	www.qcc.cuny.edu	

<i>BOX VIII: CUNY COLLEGES OFFERING ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS (Cont.)</i>		
College	Medgar Evers College	
Location	Crown Heights in Brooklyn	
Enrollment	Approximately 6,000	
Programs	Associate in Applied Science	2
	Associate in Arts	2
	Associate in Science	4
	Certificate	1
Web Page	www.mec.cuny.edu	
College	New York City College of Technology	
Location	Downtown Brooklyn	
Enrollment	Approximately 14,000	
Programs	Associate in Applied Science	25
	Associate in Arts	1
	Associate in Science	2
	Certificate	14
Web Page	www.citytech.cuny.edu	
College	College of Staten Island	
Location	Central Staten Island	
Enrollment	Approximately 13,000	
Programs	Associate in Applied Science	4
	Associate in Arts	1
	Associate in Science	2
Webpage	www.csi.cuny.edu	

While second chance programs for adolescents and young adults are virtually always free of charge to participants, the number of such programs and the number of participant slots is limited by the level of funding available—which is never sufficient for the need or demand for services. These programs also typically only have limited additional resources to help meet participants’ financial needs during their participation. Enrollment in college, however, has no limits pre-set by funding levels. Although enrollment requires the payment of tuition and fees, the availability of federal and state financial aid can enable low-income college students to cover the direct costs of attendance (including the purchase of textbooks), can provide modest additional resources to cover other expenses associated with daily living (such as food and transportation), and can place students in paying jobs through the federal work-study program.⁷

There are also other potentially valuable resources available on campuses to all enrolled students, including health care services.⁸ Colleges provide students with opportunities to participate in cocurricular and extracurricular activities—where young people can pursue and develop interests and talents and find productive social spaces that might otherwise be unavailable to them. In summary, entrance into and success in college should be seen as not only a powerful long-term strategy but also one that provides short and mid-term benefits as well.

Community colleges provide opportunities to develop academic and technical skills that can expand young people’s ideas of what is possible for them to accomplish and contribute to the development of new “projective identities” (Gee, 2004).⁹ Although it would be unwise to restrict in advance the uses that young people might make of the opportunities of college, we anticipate that most will be interested in pursuing a course of study that leads to a career. Fortunately, such programs of study are at the center of most community colleges. One of the

⁷ For the 2009-2010 school year, the annual tuition for full-time study at CUNY’s community colleges (for New York State residents) is \$3,150. For part-time students, tuition is charged on the basis of \$135 per credit. Students also have to pay a standard Technology Fee of \$100, a Consolidated Service Fee of \$15, per semester Activity Fees that vary by campus (from \$55 to \$124 a semester for full-time students).

⁸ At CUNY’s Kingsborough Community College, for example, the Office of Health Care Services offers: emergency health care; health consultations; health referrals; free MMR immunization clinics; free Hepatitis B vaccination clinics; free Influenza (FLU) clinics; health record reviews; and health education.

⁹ By way of illustration about what a projective identity might mean, Gee writes about students in a science classroom: “...active and critical learners can do more than simply carry out the role of playing a good virtual scientist in a classroom. They can form a projective identity as well. If learners are to do this, they must come to project their own values and desires onto the virtual identity of ‘being a scientist of a certain sort’ in this classroom. They must, as well, come to see this virtual identity as a project in the making—an identity they take on that entails a certain trajectory through time defined by their own values, desires, choices, and goals, as these are rooted in the interface of their own real world identities and the virtual identity.”

historic strengths of the best of career and technical education in both high school and college settings has been its appreciation for the attractions of hands-on learning and the development of productive capacities for many learners. Not surprisingly, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that learning which involves the direct use of tools can frequently be more powerful than learning which relies preponderantly on abstract mental engagement (Resnick, 1987; Rose, 2004).

There is another important aspect of career education in a college context—it holds out the distinctive prospect that it can prepare young people for jobs that will pay them enough so that they can have some discretionary financial resources and that they can obtain employment in fields with enduring opportunities. We should never underestimate the importance of sheer material need that frames the lives of many young people. There has already been some recognition of the potential of programs of study organized around career and technical skills to re-engage young people who have left high school. In the summer of 2008, a New York City Mayoral Task Force on Career and Technical Education (CTE) included in its guiding principles the recognition that CTE pathway strategies could be “a lever to engage ‘disconnected youth’ (defined as students ages 16–21 who are overage and under-credited, i.e., students who are either dropouts or are at substantial risk of dropping out)” (Mayoral Task Force on CTE Innovation, 2008).

In spite of the difficulties confronting students enrolling at community colleges, postsecondary institutions are not all the same—they have varying degrees of documented success; they have leadership with different priorities regarding the improvement of institutional effectiveness; and they have faculty members with different kinds of expertise and interests (Carey, 2008).¹⁰

The past several years have witnessed a number of exciting and promising developments in CUNY’s associate degree programs. The most promising efforts are described in Box VIII.

¹⁰ Carey summarized the findings of the 2008 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CESSIE). In addition to surveying students at about two-thirds of the community colleges in the country, CESSIE tracks the progress of students who completed the survey. Carey found that: “... there turns out to be a significant, positive relationship between academic challenge and the likelihood of students getting good grades, earning credits, and graduating—even after controlling for students’ income, prior test scores, and other factors. The same is true for things like student-faculty interaction and student support. The more colleges ask of—and give to—students, the better students perform.”

BOX IX: PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS AT CUNY

Learning Communities

A learning community consists of a group of students who take two or more courses together. The faculty members of the courses are asked to attempt to coordinate lessons and assignments (by way of example, students in a remedial writing class may be assigned essays that would reflect topics that they are studying in a psychology class) and to meet regularly to review student progress. All of the students in the learning community might also be assigned a common counselor/advisor who would be expected to remain in touch with the faculty members as well. Finally, the students might be encouraged to study together and to go to lab sections together. Several CUNY colleges, including Kingsborough Community College, LaGuardia Community College, and Queensborough Community College have become national leaders in the implementation of learning communities.¹¹

Accelerated Studies in Associate Programs (ASAP)

CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), a program that began in 2007 and enrolled only students with no remedial needs, is showing early signs of success. The program, which is funded by the Mayor's Center for Economic Opportunity, has a goal of graduating at least 50 percent of its initial cohort of 1,000 students in three years. Program features include required full-time study, free tuition, free textbooks, and free Metro Cards. ASAP students take courses in smaller blocked classes. The students also receive intense personal advising and tutoring.

Last fall, the program retained 80 percent of its students from the first year to the second. A comparison group of non-remedial students in 2006 had a fall-to-fall retention rate of 59.7 percent. If current projections are realized, the program could graduate 60 percent of its initial cohort by September 2010. By comparison, CUNY's most recent three-year graduation rate for full-time, non-remedial students (those who entered in the fall of 2004) was 24.6 percent.

The next cohort of students in ASAP will include students who have no more than one required remedial course.¹²

¹¹ See, for example, the description of the learning communities at Kingsborough Community College at: http://www.kingsborough.edu/faculty/learning_communities/index.htm. Retrieved on December 8, 2009.

¹² For information on ASAP, go to <http://web.cuny.edu/academics/academic-programs/programs-of-note/asap.html>. Retrieved on December 8, 2009.

At Home in College

At Home in College is a Robin Hood Foundation-funded college transition program that works with 200 high school seniors from seven New York City public high schools and 100 students from CUNY GED programs. The immediate goal of the project is to increase the college enrollment and retention rates of these students and, ultimately, their college graduation rates. At Home in College offers each participating student:

- transition math and English courses intended to prepare students for the CUNY placement exams and success in college credit courses;
- fee waivers for the CUNY application;
- college access activities, including help with completing online college applications, filing for financial aid, college visits, learning about different careers and programs of study, and enrolling in college;
- advisement and other assistance during the first year of college if participating students enroll at a partner CUNY community college.¹³

GED/College Transition Project

The GED/College Transition Project has been developed by the CUNY Adult Literacy/GED Program in an effort to increase the likelihood that students who obtain their high school equivalency diplomas through that program make a successful transition into college. Students need to have passed the GED Tests prior to enrollment. The program does not screen students based on their GED scores, but it does look at student attendance and work habits in their GED preparation program.

Students enroll in both math and reading/writing courses which meet for approximately 72 hours per semester. Students are scheduled in blocks for the courses and group advisement sessions. An academic advisor organizes all-group sessions to assist students in doing their online college applications, financial aid applications, and to do cohort-based CUNY placement testing. The advisor also leads weekly, hour-long meetings to educate students about credits, tuition, the GPA, enrollment requirements (such as proof of immunizations and residency), how to choose a college and a course of study, time management, and more. The advisement model is highly proactive with frequent “check-ins” with individual students to be sure they are completing necessary enrollment tasks.

¹³ For information on At Home in College, go to <http://www.cuny.edu/academics/CUNY-PublicSchoolPrograms/at-home-in-college.html>. Retrieved on December 8, 2009.

New Community College

CUNY has begun planning for the opening of a new community college in Manhattan. The first phase of the development process was exploratory in nature and, after seven months of work, resulted in the document, A New Community College Concept Paper in August of 2008. The concept paper synthesizes the ideas and experiences of CUNY faculty and staff and of educators across the nation, historical and recent research on community college programs and performance, data from CUNY's Office of Institutional Research, and advice from the project's Steering Committee and an Advisory Board of nationally recognized educational professionals.

Phase II planning, now underway, will involve working with the CUNY community, including the CUNY Steering Committee [[link to: Members of the Steering Committee](#)], faculty, staff and governance bodies, and outside experts to develop a detailed plan that will elaborate on areas already discussed and areas not addressed in the concept paper.

Among the key features of the new college are the following:

- There will be a limited number of programs, with pre-established articulation agreements or joint registration with senior colleges, all sharing a common theme of creating and sustaining a thriving New York City.
- There will be a significant pre-college component and required admissions interviews and a summer program.
- Academic and student services will be integrated.
- The first-year core curriculum will entail a new approach to developmental education and will require full-time enrollment.
- The College will include an Office of Partnerships, with the city intended to serve as an expanded site for applied learning and internships (CUNY Planning Team, 2008).

As evidence of the significant increase of interest in and commitment to the success of community colleges, CUNY has joined with the New York City Department of Education and the Mayor's Office, with the support of a number of advocacy groups, to submit a proposal to the National League of Cities for a Communities Learning in Partnership (CLIP) planning grant. The CLIP initiative is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as part of its Postsecondary Success Effort. That effort has been launched with the goal of doubling the number of low-income young adults who earn a postsecondary credential. The foundation's effort is focusing its efforts on improved access to and success in community colleges.¹⁴ In addition, the Mayor recently announced his commitment to expand the use of city resources to support student attendance and success in community colleges.

¹⁴ For information on the Post Secondary Success Initiative of the Gates Foundation, go to: <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/postsecondaryeducation/Pages/default.aspx>. Retrieved on December 8, 2009..

Essential Elements of CBO-Community College Pathways

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CBO-COMMUNITY COLLEGE PATHWAYS

CBO-community college pathways must address the essential educational needs of disconnected young adults. These needs are: a strong and coherent academic program; comprehensive support for all aspects of the college choice and applications process; and careful attention to successful transitions to college as well as after entry into college.

Strong & Coherent Academic Programs

Disconnected youth need to acquire the knowledge and skills that are more or less the equivalent of the knowledge and skills of students who have successfully completed a fairly demanding high school program of study and acquired the full range of college-ready habits and behaviors described by David Conley.

Conley's work has largely been concerned with preparing students for success in baccalaureate degree programs in relatively selective institutions, but it is directly relevant for what we propose to do for disconnected youth. An under-appreciated aspect of Conley's argument is his conviction that prospective college students need to better appreciate the expanded intellectual opportunities that a college education will afford them. He has in mind what might be considered some fairly traditional, but still powerful notions that a college education can transform students' understandings of who they are and who they might become.¹⁵ Such an ambitious goal needs to be reclaimed not only for baccalaureate degree candidates, but for those pursuing associate degrees as well.

Disconnected youth will begin their journeys toward enrollment in postsecondary education at various points. As previously mentioned, some will not be ready for enrollment in GED-level classes and will have to develop their reading, writing, and math skills before such enrollment would be appropriate. Others will be ready to begin at the GED level. And still others, who have already taken and passed the GED Tests, will be ready to begin at what we might call the post-GED/college transition level. In addition, as Goldberger and Bayerl (2008) found, students will frequently be less skilled in math than in reading/writing. Furthermore, most students will also have to continue developing their skills after they begin college, whether or not they have been required to enroll in remedial classes.

Instruction needs to move away from exam preparation (at every level) and toward more substantial knowledge and skill development—with the expectation

¹⁵ See Conley.

that improved exam performance will follow. It's essential that community-based programs have an adequate understanding of the skills and knowledge that students actually have in comparison to the competencies that college faculty consider important success. In the cases of courses that are dependent on enhanced literacy skills, this would include: reading and interpreting textbooks and general interest materials; organizing and presenting ideas; and writing clearly and effectively for different audiences. In the case of courses that are dependent on math skills, this would include: examining and discussing underlying mathematical relationships from the beginning; building towards an understanding of why rules work; and emphasizing the importance of meaningful communication in oral, written, and symbolic forms.

There are several quite promising models of pre-college academic preparation at CUNY. They include CUNY Prep (a full-time program of combined GED and college preparation in the Bronx); CLIP (CUNY's Language Immersion Program) for students who are English language learners; the previously mentioned GED/College Transitions; and the At Home in College project. Of special note is the recent work in mathematics conducted by Steve Hinds (2009), one of the individuals responsible for the GED/College Transitions Project.

Support for College Choice & Application

In the same way that individuals cannot be too well-prepared academically for college, potential college students cannot be too well-versed in their understandings of the college-going process. Janice Bloom (2008), a researcher into issues of college transitions, has suggested that what individuals need in order to make wise choices about where to go and what to do is a deep "specificity" of knowledge—about matters such as different types of colleges, different academic programs, majors, degrees, extra-curricular activities, etc.

Knowing when and how to do what is necessary to apply to and get into a college (that would be a good match in light of personal interests and inclinations) is a daunting challenge for many young people. They need good information, good advice, and a fair amount of direct assistance. When they don't have the information and assistance they need, young people frequently don't complete important steps of the application processes on time, make uninformed choices, and ultimately find themselves in college situations that are not conducive to success. Disconnected youth cannot afford to find themselves in yet another educational setting that is not conducive to their success. Therefore, they need high quality information, advice, and assistance—about what college is like, how to choose a college to attend, and how to complete all of the various applications tasks.

What College Is Like

Colleges are, at the least, two things: (1) places where faculty members teach and students learn; and (2) places which are run by rules. Reconnecting students need to be prepared to deal with both dimensions. Another study, recently completed by the author of this report (Garvey, 2009), incorporated the results of interviews conducted with college faculty and staff on the experiences of new college students:

The interviewees frequently chose to emphasize that the issue was not so much that students had misconceptions but rather that they had lacked exposure to what college would be like and that, as a result, they were not familiar with or acclimated to the culture of college. In the case of reading, this took the form of a lack of recognition of the importance of the “close” reading of a text rather than having a general sense of what a text meant. This suggests that for many students, becoming ready for college may involve less of becoming better at what they have not been very good at in high school and, instead, becoming good at something quite different.

Some of the interviewees suggested that in high school, students had been encouraged to follow “scripts”—packaged instructions—as a way to respond to assignments, whereas in college, they might very well be faced with a series of unpredictable assignments requiring innovative responses. Virtually all of the interviewees expressed their conviction that the ability of the students to do the work was not really the issue. Instead, the extent of their real engagement with the work was the salient factor.

...students frequently misinterpret some of what they encounter. They see every failure as a sign of fundamental, personal inadequacy, rather than as a sign of their need to further develop skills. Instead of seeing a shortcoming as the result of too little practice, they see it as a sign that they should perhaps not be in college in the first place. In addition, they too often see “being ready” as a one-time phenomenon and fail to recognize that they will encounter many new challenges to their readiness.

The interviewees also suggested that students were frequently “surprised”—surprised by having to take remedial courses and by what they were assigned to do—and that they often became frustrated and angry at their predicament.

The challenges associated with learning in a college context are real enough, but the challenges of playing by the rules cannot be underestimated—especially for individuals who are unaccustomed to them. The rules by which colleges work are not obvious to people who do not work in them or who are not already familiar with them. Disconnected youth who are becoming prospective college students need to understand how colleges work (or, even better, how colleges should work) before they apply, before they enroll, and after they enroll. The essential rules concern both specifically academic matters and matters connected to the particular bureaucratic procedures customarily used by colleges (for example, deadlines and documents)—some of which are the result of statutory or regulatory decisions regarding issues such as financial aid eligibility. While it is likely that the rules of different institutions will be relatively similar, it is the distinctive ways in which rules are implemented at different colleges that pose the greatest challenge to reconnecting students. Therefore, it's probably wise to avoid reducing pre-college lessons about these matters to pat answers and instead focus on the reasons why rules for different matters (such as majors, degrees, credits, course requirements, pre-requisites, and academic standing) are in place at all and the possible variations in rules that students might encounter at different colleges. Perhaps most important, students need to become familiar with the characteristic organization of informational materials (such as college catalogues) and knowledgeable about what might be considered “the vocabulary of college.”

These are also not simple matters and an approach to informing students about them that relies on telling them what they need to know will all but certainly prove ineffective. Students need opportunities to work through their understandings of these complex matters and to develop increasingly more nuanced understandings while, at the same time, they need to be prepared to seek out new information when they need it and search out and use all of the support they can find.

College and Program Choice

Prospective community college students have choices—within the CUNY system and outside it. They need to have sustained opportunities to become familiar with different colleges so that they know about the programs of study they offer; what kinds of jobs and careers those programs lead to; any special programs they offer (such as learning communities); and, **very importantly**, how well students enrolled at different colleges do (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009). They would also benefit from knowing about the size of the campuses, the kinds of facilities they have, the student services they offer and how long it takes to get back and forth from their homes.

Students can learn by spending time on college web pages, by reading print materials (such as catalogues), and by visiting the campuses. Most colleges offer

structured visits that can be very valuable, but it would also be helpful for students to visit informally and to seek out opportunities to talk with faculty members and currently enrolled students.

Applications

Prospective college students need to complete and submit a set of complicated forms for admissions and financial aid. In the case of the City University of New York, the centralized application process for regular admission as a new freshman, administered by the University's Application Processing Center (UAPC), is relatively straightforward. However, unless a student applies directly at one of the colleges, it does require the submission of an application online and then the mailing in of additional documents. There is a good deal of helpful information on the Office of Admissions Service's web page, including an application worksheet that students can use to prepare for the online submission.

Unfortunately, the information regarding applicants for have earned equivalency diplomas by passing the GED Tests is not especially well highlighted. The principal difference between those applicants and high school graduates is the requirement that they submit copies of the diploma and test score transcript issued by the State Education Department.¹⁶

The financial aid application process is far more complex, time consuming, and potentially frustrating. It needs its own box.

¹⁶ Applicants are advised as follows: "If you have received your General Educational Development (GED) diploma from New York State, mail a photocopy of the original diploma along with your GED test scores to UAPC. You may obtain a copy from the New York State Education Department High School Equivalency Testing Program, PO Box 7348, Albany, New York, 12224-0348. If you received your GED diploma in a state outside of New York, contact the appropriate State Education Department."

BOX X: FINANCIAL AID

In New York City, college students are eligible for federal student aid (Pell grants and loans) and state aid (the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)). These sources of financial aid have similar, but not identical, eligibility criteria. The criteria include requirements regarding:

- submission of financial aid application forms (FAFSA and TAP application);
- individual and family income and assets;
- enrollment status (i.e., full or part-time);
- citizenship or eligible non-citizen;
- possession of a valid Social Security Number;
- compliance with Selective Service registration rules (for males);
- status of prior loan repayments;
- continued good academic standing;
- absence of drug convictions;
- documentation to verify information contained in financial aid applications.

The extent of need for financial aid awards is determined by the calculation of an Expected Family Contribution (which reflects total family income, applicant's dependency status, number of people in the family, number of family members in college, and some family assets. Awards are more or less proportional to the extent of need. In the case of the Pell Grants, for the 2009-2010 school year, eligibility required an Expected Family Contribution of under \$4,618 and the award amounts ranged from a minimum of \$976 to a maximum of \$5,350.

The eligibility criteria are often quite technical in nature and many students will have particular circumstances that will affect their eligibility and the amount of aid they might receive.

For additional information on financial aid eligibility and award calculations, go to <http://web.cuny.edu/admissions/financial-aid.html>.

As is well known, the principal application for financial aid is the FAFSA—the Federal Application for Federal Financial Aid. For information on the FAFSA, go to <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. As this report was being finalized for publication, it was learned that the US Department of Education had announced major changes to the FAFSA in an effort to make it more user-friendly. Nonetheless, in most cases,

students and their parents would be well served by having the application completed by an expert volunteer.

The TAP application requires the prior submission of the FAFSA. For information on the TAP application, go to http://www.hesc.com/content.nsf/SFC/3/Apply_for_TAP_Now. Please note that TAP is administered by the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC).

There are a number of different types of loans that have quite different terms and implications for students. But they all do have to be repaid. In general, students should be advised to proceed very cautiously when it comes to thinking about loans. For information on student loans, go to Federal Student Aid FAFSA4caster at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov/F4CApp/index/index.jsf.

-Attention to Transitions

Power of Connections

It is perhaps obvious that a transition to a new and unfamiliar institution will involve confusion and uncertainty. While students often enough begin college at the same time as others they may know from school, a program or the neighborhood, the traditional college schedule makes it unlikely that they will be spending much time together. Instead, students can find themselves in four or five different classes, each with entirely different groups of students. As a result, they can easily come to imagine that their difficulties are somewhat unique and not perform as well as they are able. The New York City-based Posse Foundation found this to be a significant problem even with quite well-prepared students who had been admitted to selective liberal arts colleges. The foundation has demonstrated that when students belong to a group, a posse, or a cohort, their likelihood of success is increased.¹⁷

Getting Started on the Right Foot

There are three essentials: (1) doing as well as possible on the placement tests; (2) registering early to increase the likelihood of getting the right courses on a convenient schedule; and (3) buying all the required textbooks and other materials as soon as classes start.

Placement Tests

In light of the consequences of failure (assignment to remediation) and the somewhat strange form of a computer adaptive test, it is essential that students are aware of the ways in which the test is designed and how they can maximize

¹⁷ For information on the Posse Foundation, go to <http://www.possefoundation.org>. Retrieved on December 8, 2009.

their performance. Specifically, students need to know that their knowledge will be judged on the basis of a relatively small number of items. They also need to know that each right or wrong answer has significant implications for how well they will do on the test as a whole; that each right answer will make it more likely that they will “pass” and that each wrong answer will make it more likely that they will “fail.”¹⁸

Registration

Most new freshmen at CUNY enroll as full-time students and, therefore, it may not be necessary to emphasize how important it is for students to plan on attending full-time and consistently, i.e., every semester, including summer. But emphasize it, we will. While full-time study will undoubtedly lead to challenges for students who have other responsibilities (working, caring for family members, etc.), it appears to be directly related to an increased likelihood of success.¹⁹

Full-time study requires a lot of advanced planning. Students should go to registration with a good idea of the courses they want or need to take and the schedule of classes that would be most convenient. Needless to say, it’s likely that no possible schedule will be perfect; therefore, students should be prepared for alternatives that might work almost as well. The chances of getting a good schedule (meaning the right courses at the right time) are increased if registration is done as early as possible. Students need to pay attention to all of the postings about registration and they need to make sure they have everything they need—especially proof of immunization. They should not wait to be told that they need it when they’re at the front of the line.

Books & Supplies

Students cannot afford to lose a single day of doing the work they are assigned. Therefore, they need all of the books and materials as soon as classes start. Since college textbooks are almost always expensive, students need to be prepared to lay out a fair amount of money. While the full financial aid package might include enough to cover these costs, the funds might not be available at the beginning of the semester. Students, their parents, and their advocates should be ready to handle this issue before it becomes a problem.

Timely Advice and Assistance

Community college students will frequently discover that they don’t know how to navigate what will appear as a very confusing institution and/or that they are

¹⁸ CUNY has placed a good deal of very valuable information about its placement tests on its web page. Go to <http://web.cuny.edu/academics/oa/testing/cuny-assessment-tests.html>.

¹⁹ I don’t have the citation I need—I will get it...

having trouble figuring out exactly what a professor expects of them. Unfortunately, students frequently do not seek out knowledgeable assistance and attempt to muddle through on their own. When they do seek help, it is often too late. A number of colleges have responded to this reality by not waiting for problems to materialize and have developed comprehensive proactive models of providing information and support. In fact, some colleges make it difficult for the students to not take advantage of the counseling services. Such a form of counseling has sometimes been called “intrusive.”²⁰ But that is not necessarily the case at all colleges and students must be ready to go looking for what they need. It would be especially helpful if they had someone to turn to if and when they need help.²¹

Managing Finances

We have previously mentioned the challenges of buying books before financial aid awards are available. By way of example, during the 2008-2009 academic year, Pell Grants were not available to students until November 5th in the fall and April 8th in the spring. Students who are aware of the relatively late date of the payments can be assisted in navigating the first couple of months of each semester until the funds are released. If they’re not, they could very well find themselves in one financial emergency after another. To take full advantage of these resources, students will almost always need access to expert advice and assistance (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2008).

Balancing School & Work

This may be the toughest issue of all. It will be very difficult for most disconnected youth to avoid working while they are attending college. They will, more often than not, be inclined to take whatever jobs they can find and may not be prepared for the consequences of work schedules or simple tiredness on their ability to attend classes and complete assignments. They would benefit greatly if they could learn from the experiences of other students about what kinds of job situations are best to avoid and what strategies to use when the conflict between college and work threatens to overwhelm them.

²⁰ The LifeMap program at Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida is distinguished by its thoroughness and its developmental character—meaning that students are given as much support as they need when they begin but are expected to become increasingly self-reliant over time. The web page for LifeMap is <http://www.valenciacollege.edu/lifemap>.

²¹ CUNY Prep has placed a staff member at Hostos Community College to provide direct assistance to program graduates enrolled at that college. The staff member works closely with Hostos staff to ensure that students have accurate information and helpful advice.

Essential Aspects of Effective CBO-College Partnerships

ESSENTIAL ASPECTS OF EFFECTIVE CBO-COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

The essential aspects of the kinds of partnerships between CBOs and community colleges that can transform the landscape of possibility for disconnected young people are the following:

- Partnerships need to be “strong”—meaning that they need to be formed on the basis of mutually transparent understandings and clear definitions of shared and distinctive responsibilities. It is likely that they would need to be formalized in written agreements.
- Partner institutions need to commit to common pedagogical design principles, i.e., student learning and development are at the center of an effective initiative.
- Partnerships need to develop and consistently use well-aligned assessments in order to determine when students are ready to move on to the next stage of their academic and personal development.
- Partnership members need to develop and provide developmentally-sensitive pre-GED, GED, pre-college, and introductory college coursework
- Partnership members should integrate academic and occupational instruction; this also involves a common understanding of the contribution of experiential learning in field placements.
- Partnership members should develop and implement shared protocols of practice regarding instruction, advising, and case management.
- Partnership members need to commit to the close tracking of all aspects of participant/student activity and achievement as well as be willing to taking quick action in response to emerging patterns of student achievement or failure.

Capacity Building

CAPACITY BUILDING

If the proposed initiative is to be successful, it will require expanded and strengthened capacities in participating CBOs and community colleges. That capacity-building work needs to be characterized by reciprocal teaching and learning. There is a helpful parallel for capacity building in the earlier findings on learning. Capacity building is not simply a matter of giving information to organizations or individuals and expecting that they will know what to do with it. Good information does matter—just like good content knowledge matters—but it must be integrated with effective teaching techniques and careful assessments of staff learning. Neither CBOs nor community colleges will be able to acquire the knowledge and skills they need independently. They will need access to one or more expert providers who can organize all the necessary knowledge and develop effective vehicles for organizational growth and professional development.

The Youth Development Institute has taken the lead in previous capacity-building efforts for CBOs. In May 2003, it published a summary of its work in that area and highlighted a number of essential matters.

Capacity-building work will be necessary in the following areas:

- [Characteristics of disconnected youth](#)
- [Principles of effective youth development](#)
- [College readiness](#)
- [College choice](#)
- [Academic preparation](#)
- [Teaching and learning](#)
- [College transitions](#)
- [Institutional policies and practices.](#)

Concluding Thoughts

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This report has covered a great many topics and it is likely that there are other topics that should have been included and topics that deserved more attention. It is not likely that this report can serve as a stand-alone framework for the full development of the new model that's described. Hopefully, it can serve as a starting point for a conversation among interested stakeholders to determine the extent of willingness to go forward with the fuller development of a program design and the identification of possible funders.

We conclude with a few additional thoughts. First, students do not become prepared for college through short cuts. If really good school experiences from kindergarten through 12th grade are more or less necessary for a student to be well-prepared for college, individuals who have not had the benefit of such positive experiences need rich and well-designed educational experiences to enable them to acquire a reasonably good approximation of what they need. Second, the fundamental basis of successful participation in pre-college or college-level education is the ability to read well. If individuals struggle with reading, all of the other academic challenges they face will be magnified. This is not meant to suggest that students cannot continue to enhance their reading skills as they progress through a sequence of educational programs, but they cannot really succeed in any particular phase until they have acquired reading skills that are good enough to get them started with a reasonable chance of success. Third, there is a need for high levels of responsibility on the part of young people, the program and college staff members, and the institutions within which they do their work. Responsibility, in this case, means being willing to do more than what is needed and never settling for less than the young people deserve.

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