

## Accelerated Study Program Improves Outcomes for Developmental Education Students

MDRC recently released a [report](#) on early findings from the [Accelerated Study in Associate Programs \(ASAP\)](#) at the [City University of New York \(CUNY\)](#) that suggest the ASAP model offers positive, lasting supports for low-income students.

ASAP is a three-year intervention designed to encourage community college students to attend school full time and to graduate. It provides an array of supports and incentives for up to three years to address multiple barriers to student success. Its elements include block-scheduled classes, comprehensive advisement, tutoring, career services, free MetroCards, free use of textbooks, and a tuition waiver to cover any gap between a student's financial aid and the school's tuition and fees. In a random assignment study, three CUNY community colleges—Borough of Manhattan, Kingsborough, and LaGuardia—compared the success rates of their ASAP students with those of other low-income students receiving regular services and classes. After one semester, ASAP had a higher proportion of students who completed their developmental education courses, a higher number of credits earned per student, and higher rates of full-time enrollment in the first and second semesters. Based on program effects to date, CUNY is expanding the program to serve over 4,000 students by 2014, tripling its current size.

The nation's 1,167 community colleges enroll some 12.4 million students and serve disproportionately more disadvantaged students than do four-year, non-community college institutions. Further, while community colleges are increasingly subject to growing expectations about developing a better-educated and credentialed workforce, their completion rates are low, particularly for students with developmental needs. These students' lack of preparation causes them to struggle academically, increasing the likelihood that they will fail and have to repeat required courses. Developmental courses are negatively correlated with student success and persistence. And the longer the delay in completing a degree, the less likely it is that a student will ever complete it.

ASAP's early effects are larger than those of most of the community college programs that MDRC has previously studied. Future reports will show whether these effects can be sustained—or even grow—as students continue in the program. MDRC's evaluation also will examine the implementation of ASAP, and the key differences between ASAP and standard college services and courses. While the evaluation is not designed to definitively determine which components of ASAP matter the most, the implementation research will shed light on their relative importance.

## Job Prospects for High School Graduates In the Face of the Great Recession

Rutgers University recently released the study [Left Out. Forgotten? Recent High School Graduates and the Great Recession](#), which provides a wealth of information on the employment situation of a representative sample of 544 people who graduated high school between 2006 and 2011. This column summarizes several of the findings from the survey the authors of this study conducted in spring 2012.

*Employment Status of the Sample.* College graduates are employed at nearly twice the rate of high school graduates, with only three in 10 of the latter employed full time. For those who graduated high school in 2008 or earlier, 37 percent are employed full time. This compares with only 16 percent of graduates from the 2009-11 recession.

*First Job.* Since graduating from high school, approximately half of the students were able to find at least one full-time job, but as of spring 2012, only 30 percent were employed full time. About 90 percent of these employees are on hourly wages. The median hourly wage for these first jobs was \$7.50, barely above minimum wage.

*Current Job.* As compared with their first jobs, the high school graduates in this sample have progressed from starting hourly wages of \$7.50 to \$8.25 in their current jobs. The median wage for these graduates in their current jobs is \$9.25 per hour. Seventy percent of these current jobs are temporary positions. Only 10 percent of these graduates hold jobs with an annual salary.

*The Unemployed.* Thirty percent of those surveyed are unemployed and looking for work. This finding is consistent with [Bureau of Labor Statistics' data](#) showing a 33 percent unemployment rate for young high school graduates not enrolled in college between 2010 and 2011.

*Workforce Preparation.* Even though 70 percent of those surveyed say they enjoyed their high school experience, they are much less persuaded that their education prepared them adequately for their transition to the workforce. Half of the graduates reported that high school did a poor job of preparing them for their first jobs.

*College Plans.* Many of these students say their college aspirations have foundered, usually due to costs or the needs to work.

*Expectations for the Future.* There is great pessimism among high school graduates about what the future holds for them. Graduates expecting their generation to do less well financially than the one before them outnumber those who expect to do better by a margin of four to one. Most believe they are less prepared than the previous generation to enter the workforce.