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# Audit Report

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CUNY Master Plan Amendment

Data Verification

January 1, 2001 to September 30, 2002

SP-1100-2

December 23, 2002

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**The University of the State of New York  
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
Office of Audit Services  
Albany, New York 12234**





THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

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December 23, 2002

Dr. Louise Mirrer  
Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
The City University of New York  
535 East 80<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, New York 10021

Dear Dr. Mirrer:

The following is our final audit report (SP-1100-2) related to the audit of the data submitted in support of the CUNY Master Plan Amendment for the period January 1, 2001 through September 30, 2002. The audit was conducted pursuant to the Board of Regents/State Education Department Strategic Plan – Goal #5 which states: “Resources under our care will be used or maintained in the public interest.”

Ninety days from the issuance of this report, CUNY officials will be asked to submit a report on actions taken as a result of this audit. I appreciate the cooperation and courtesies extended to the staff during the audit.

Sincerely,

Daniel Tworek

Enclosure

cc: Johanna Duncan-Poitier  
Joseph Frey  
Thomas Sheldon

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# Executive Summary

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## Executive Summary

The Office of Audit Services' (OAS) Tactical Audit Plan (July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2001) called for an initiative to evaluate the adequacy of City University of New York (CUNY) management controls over the collection, compilation, and submission of data needed to measure the effect of the Master Plan Amendment (Amendment). The Board of Regents gave interim approval of the Amendment pending an assessment of the effect on student access to CUNY.

The purpose of the audit is to examine management practices, records, and documentation related to the data collection processes within CUNY. This is a performance audit and represents an objective and systematic examination of key data elements regarding the Amendment for the purpose of providing an independent assessment of the accuracy and reliability of such data. The results will provide information to improve public accountability and facilitate decision making by the Board of Regents with respect to the Amendment.

The objectives of the audit are as follows:

- Verify that students being admitted to the Prelude to Success; the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK); and the College Discovery (CD) opportunity programs meet eligibility requirements.
- Document the processes at individual CUNY campuses for the collection of student data. Document the process to transfer key data to CUNY Central Administration.
- Assess CUNY management controls over the collection, compilation, and reporting of key data used to measure the impact of the Amendment. The key data include, but are not limited to, institutional enrollment by ethnicity, pass rates, persistence rates, and success rates for students enrolled in opportunity programs. Data will also be examined for full- and part-time students, as well as students with physical and learning disabilities.
- Verify the validity and reliability of the data reported.
- Provide support to the Office of Higher Education in assessing the adequacy of other data as the need is identified.

## Audit Results

The audit found that CUNY has adequate management controls over the collection, compilation, and submission of data needed to measure the effect of the Amendment. The data submitted were, for the most part, accurate. The audit recommends some improvements in the way data are collected and reported including:

- Maintaining documentation of student eligibility for the opportunity programs;
- Reexamining the relationships between the UAPC data and SIMS data;
- Excluding students in the persistence category who do not attend classes in subsequent semesters and those who move to an associate program;

- Excluding ESL students in the statistics on passing assessment tests;
- Excluding students who failed to complete the College Now program when reporting on results;
- Reviewing enrollment data prior to including them on reports sent to the Department.

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# Introduction

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## Background

The Office of Audit Services' (OAS) Tactical Audit Plan (July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2002) called for an initiative to evaluate the adequacy of City University of New York's (CUNY) management controls over the collection, compilation, and submission of data needed to measure the effect of the Master Plan Amendment (Amendment). The Board of Regents gave interim approval of the Amendment pending an assessment of the effect on student access to CUNY.

OAS was given the assignment to audit the extent to which data submitted by CUNY are valid and can be relied upon for making judgments regarding the Amendment's implementation. The initiative covered a two-year period ending December 31, 2002.

CUNY was required to submit a report on key data by December 31, 2001 and to update this report through the beginning of the Fall 2002 semester by November 15, 2002.

## Purpose, Objective, Scope and Methodology

The purpose of the audit is to examine management practices, records, and documentation related to the data collection processes within CUNY. This is a performance audit and represents an objective and systematic examination of key data elements regarding the Amendment for the purpose of providing an independent assessment regarding the accuracy and reliability of such data. The results will provide information to improve public accountability and facilitate decision making by the Regents with respect to the Amendment.

The objectives of the audit are as follows:

- Verify that students being admitted to the Prelude to Success; the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK); and the College Discovery (CD) opportunity programs meet eligibility requirements.

- Document the processes at individual CUNY campuses for the collection of student data. Document the process that transfers key data to CUNY Central Administration.
- Assess CUNY management controls over collecting, compiling, and reporting key data used to measure the impact of the Amendment. The key data include, but are not limited to, institutional enrollment by ethnicity, pass rates, persistence rates, and success rates for students enrolled in opportunity programs. Data will also be examined for full- and part-time students, as well as students with physical and learning disabilities.
- Verify the validity and reliability of the data reported.
- Provide support to the Office of Higher Education in assessing the adequacy of other data as the need is identified.

We conducted this audit in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. To accomplish our objectives, we reviewed applicable laws, regulations, policies and procedures; interviewed Department and CUNY management and staff; examined records and supporting documentation; and sampled data accuracy on a non-statistical basis.

Previous reports were submitted to CUNY representing progress through June 30, 2002. This report is a compilation of the findings previously reported and new findings on the CUNY enrollment data.

The audit focused on the following:

- Verifying that student eligibility criteria were followed in the Prelude to Success, SEEK, and CD programs. The verification is based upon a review of a sample of students at Hunter and Baruch Colleges, LaGuardia Community College, and Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC).
- Verifying specific data elements that were submitted by CUNY to the Department as part of the initial Board of Regents consideration of the Amendment.
- Verifying data on the Fall 2000 admissions process at CUNY colleges subject to the January 25, 1999 resolution phasing out remedial programs in baccalaureate programs.

## **Comments of CUNY Officials**

CUNY officials' comments to the findings were considered in preparing this report and are included as Appendix B.

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# Verification of Opportunity Program Eligibility Requirements

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The audit reviewed the eligibility of students admitted to the opportunity programs that assist students in need of remediation. The audit found that, for the most part, students have met the eligibility requirements for the various programs. CUNY's Central Administration allocates SEEK slots to the senior colleges. If Hunter or Baruch were unable to fill their allocation using their regular established criteria, an alternative, less academically demanding criteria were used. Eligibility requirements for Prelude to Success are not strictly adhered to. A degree of flexibility is exercised.

CUNY offers three programs to assist students in need of remediation as defined below.

CD provides counseling, remedial instruction, and tutorial services to community college students. Some students also receive a stipend for book expenses. Students must be academically and economically disadvantaged. Students with a College Admissions Average (CAA) of below 80 who meet CUNY-wide economic criteria are eligible.

SEEK provides counseling, academic support, and tutorial services to senior college students. Some students also receive a stipend for book expenses. Students must be academically and economically disadvantaged. Students who do not meet the admissions criteria for a regular student and meet CUNY-wide economic criteria are eligible. SEEK students must pass all academic assessment tests within one year of being in the program.

Prelude to Success enables students who have not passed the assessment test requirements of the senior college, but have scored high enough to be potentially expected to pass the assessment tests after one semester of remedial courses and attend classes at the senior college. These students take a mix of remedial and credit courses at the senior college, but are enrolled at a community college.

## **Hunter College**

### *Prelude to Success*

There were 138 Prelude to Success students at Hunter in Fall 2000. A sample of 25 students was selected. The audit questions the eligibility of three students.

Prelude to Success students are required to score a 5 or 6 on the CUNY Writing Assessment Test (CWRAT). One of the sampled students was admitted to the program in Fall 2000 based on a score of 6 on a writing exam taken on December 10, 1998. He took the exam again on June 26, 2000 and scored 4, which would make him ineligible. Also, two students scored one point below the minimum on one of the three Freshman Skills Aptitude Tests (FSAT) tests, but were admitted to Prelude to Success with the approval of BMCC.

### *SEEK*

A sample of 29 students was selected. Of the 243 SEEK students who were admitted to Hunter in 2000, 33 had not attained academic proficiency when the Fall semester began. Four of those students enrolled in community colleges; the remaining 29 were provided with remediation. The majority of these students were English as a Second Language (ESL) and had very limited English language skills.

Current high school graduates are admitted to SEEK with a College Proficiency Index (Index) number between 240 and 300. If the Index cannot be used, an alternate admissions criterion is applied.

Of the 29 SEEK students, 27 met the academic eligibility requirements using the Index. The other two had Indexes that exceeded 300. They were ineligible for SEEK because they met the Index requirements for regular admission. They were accepted into SEEK, however, because they did not meet Hunter's alternative admissions criteria (Criteria) to be a regular student. These Criteria are normally used for international, General Education Diploma (GED), and prior (graduated more than a year ago) high school graduates.

Economic eligibility was verified for all but two students whose tax records were missing.

## **Baruch College**

### *Prelude to Success*

A sample of 34 students was selected. Students must pass at least one of the admissions tests to be selected for Prelude to Success. Unlike the practice at Hunter, there is no established range within which the failing marks must fall. Baruch officials stated that candidates for Prelude to Success do not generally score poorly on the assessment tests.

Of the 34 students, 31 were found to be eligible. The remaining three (8.8 percent) who failed all three admissions tests were admitted as a result of an administrative error.

### *SEEK*

A sample of 30 students was selected. Current high school graduates who do not meet the admissions criteria for a regular student are admitted to SEEK with an Index number between 290 and 308. If the Index is not within that range or cannot be used, an alternate, less stringent academic criterion is used.

The audit verified academic eligibility and found that none of the students met the admissions criteria for a regular student. Although six of the students did not meet Baruch's preferred criteria, they were admitted under the alternate criteria.

The audit also verified economic eligibility of all sampled students by examining tax returns.

## **LaGuardia Community College**

### *College Discovery*

A sample of 30 students was selected. The audit verified the academic eligibility of all the sampled students. They all had CAAs of less than 80.

Of the 21 students who provided parental tax information, 20 were found to be economically disadvantaged and one exceeded the income ceiling by only .057 percent.

## **Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC)**

### *College Discovery*

A sample of 25 students was selected. The audit verified the academic eligibility of 22 of the 25 students. They all had CAAs of less than 80. Two others could not be verified as they had CAAs of 11 (undeterminable CAAs). The remaining sample student's CAA was updated from 11 to over 80 and, therefore, should not have been in the program. The audit verified that 24 of the 25 students were economically disadvantaged and, therefore, eligible. No financial information has been provided for the remaining sample student.

### **Comments of CUNY Officials**

CUNY officials responded that the seven students identified in the report as not being eligible were in fact eligible or did not participate in the programs.

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# Reliability of Ethnic Data

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Performance trends in the race/ethnicity of CUNY students after the implementation of the Amendment are critical information needed to consider permanent approval. We examined the accuracy of CUNY reporting of ethnic data. Some errors were noted in the recording of student ethnicity, particularly at community colleges. In addition, the imputation of ethnicity seems to be less accurate than what is reported by CUNY.

In Spring 2001, Brooklyn College, Kingsborough Community College (KCC), Queens College and Queensborough Community College (QCC) were visited. Each college tracks student data using the Student Information Management System (SIMS). SIMS data are transmitted to CUNY Central Administration and compiled into statistical tables that are submitted to the Department in support of the Amendment.

The majority of CUNY students are admitted to the colleges by applying through the University Application Processing Center (UAPC). UAPC then allocates them to the various colleges. However, applicants who apply close to the beginning of the term must apply directly to the individual colleges. The colleges then verify that the applicants meet their criteria and may admit them as “direct admits.”

UAPC creates files of the enrollees’ information that is taken from the application forms. It sends these files, as well as the hard copies of the applications, to the colleges. The colleges then load these data into SIMS. In the case of direct admits, however, the college first enters the students’ data into its system and then sends the applications to UAPC. UAPC enters the data into its data system, transfers the data back to SIMS, and returns the hard copy of the application back to the college. SIMS does not recognize discrepancies between data that were recorded in it directly at the college level and data being loaded into it from UAPC. UAPC data only update blank fields. They do not change the data in a field that is already filled.

Ethnicity is self-reported by the student on the admissions application. Students who choose not to report their ethnicity are recorded by UAPC and SIMS as having “Missing” ethnicities. Discriminant analysis is used by CUNY Central Administration to impute the ethnicities of these students.

Discriminant analysis is a method that uses information from cases with known ethnicity to predict the ethnic group of those with unknown ethnicity. The following variables are used to impute ethnicity for students with missing information: age, gender, class level (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), graduate versus undergraduate program, degree/non-degree status, full-time/part-time enrollment status, college of attendance, Hispanic surname, Asian surname, percentage Asian in each of the zip codes, percentage Black in each of the zip codes, and percentage Hispanic in each of the zip codes.

The audit examined the data and assessed the extent to which ethnic data are reliable. As discussed below, some errors were noted in the recording of student ethnicity, particularly at the community colleges.

## **Recording Ethnicity from Student Applications**

The audit compared the ethnicity recorded on 309 student admission applications to UAPC's records. Of the 309, 4 (1.3 percent) were not recorded properly by UAPC. In three of the cases, the applications showed one ethnicity while UAPC recorded a different one. In the fourth case, the applicant checked off "Other" and wrote in "Black-Hispanic," and UAPC recorded ethnicity as "Other." Since this applicant wrote in "Hispanic," he should not have been classified as "Other" but rather as "Hispanic."

The primary concern is the validity of UAPC's ethnicity data since, most of the time, the data ultimately flow to SIMS and then to CUNY Central Administration. The following discussion focuses on examples of data that may be inaccurate due to UAPC data not updating SIMS records.

## **Different Ethnicities in SIMS and UAPC Data**

The audit compared UAPC records containing the social security number and ethnicity of all Fall 1999 and Fall 2000 first-time freshmen to SIMS records. Originally, only UAPC records for the students allocated to Hunter College, Baruch College, LaGuardia Community College, and BMCC were sent to us. However, many students listed in UAPC records as being allocated to one college may actually enroll in another, which required the audit to review the entire UAPC file.

The comparison of the two files identified discrepancies in the recording of ethnicities. Only cases in which an actual ethnicity was listed in both UAPC and SIMS were considered.

In Fall 2000, there were 4,810 files for which UAPC and SIMS ethnic data were recorded. In 14 cases (.29 percent), the ethnicity in SIMS differed from the ethnicity in UAPC's database. In Fall 1999, there were 4,858 SIMS student data files for which UAPC data were available. The recorded ethnicities differed in 16 (.33 percent) of the cases.

### **Ethnicity Missing in SIMS but Recorded in UAPC**

In some cases, ethnicity information was recorded on the UAPC system but was missing in SIMS. Most of these discrepancies were found to be in connection with the "direct admit" students. Since data that a college enters into SIMS for the direct admit students are not subsequently overlaid (updated) by the data that UAPC sends, these discrepancies are most likely the result of either data entry mistakes or the omission of an entry by the college.

In Fall 2000 at QCC, 322 of 633 students (50.9 percent) with missing ethnicity data in SIMS had ethnicity listed in UAPC's records. Of the 322 students, 247 (76.7 percent) were "direct admits" and 75 (23.3 percent) were UAPC admits. In Fall 2000 at KCC, 97 of 380 students (25.5 percent) with missing ethnicity data in SIMS had ethnicity listed in UAPC's records. Of the 97 students, 41 (42.3 percent) were "direct admits" and 56 (57.7 percent) were UAPC admits.

In Fall 1999 at KCC, 47 of 529 (8.9 percent) students with missing ethnicity data in SIMS had ethnicity listed in UAPC's records. All of the 47 students were "direct admits."

The 75 QCC and 56 KCC UAPC admit students who had ethnicities listed in UAPC records but not in SIMS raised a question. Since all of the data recorded in SIMS for UAPC admits are electronically transferred from UAPC files, these data should be identical. It is highly unlikely that a college would change a known ethnicity to "missing." It was determined that the students were originally allocated by UAPC to another college. The students subsequently decided to enroll at KCC and completed a "Request for Reallocation" form. Since this form does not contain any ethnicity data, they were recorded with missing ethnicities. These incomplete data

and not the ethnic data recorded by UAPC were sent within the first few weeks of the semester to CUNY Central Administration as part of the Show Registration Tape that CUNY Central Administration uses for its statistical tables.

The fact that UAPC data are only loaded into empty SIMS fields and that SIMS does not recognize discrepancies between it and UAPC would appear to be flaws in the system. If ethnicity is recorded as “Missing” in SIMS, it should be updated with UAPC’s data and, if UAPC has a different ethnicity recorded in it than does SIMS, an error message should be generated.

The audit did not consider it a discrepancy if a student’s ethnicity was listed as “Missing” or as “Other” by UAPC but reported by SIMS. The ethnicity data were most likely either missing on the student’s admissions application or, because of missing documentation, UAPC may have been prevented from processing the application. In either case, the ethnicity was subsequently entered into SIMS by the college when the information became available. This new information was not shared with UAPC. This may be a shortcoming of the system but it does not lead to inaccurate reporting of ethnicity. Ethnicity data flows from SIMS to CUNY Central Administration. CUNY Central Administration does not use UAPC’s data in compiling its ethnicity statistics.

## **Testing the Accuracy of CUNY Central’s Data**

### *Accuracy of Imputations*

CUNY Central Administration uses SIMS data for various analyses and statistical reports. Since ethnicity is often missing in the SIMS files, CUNY Central Administration must impute the data. CUNY Central Administration claims that its imputations are 77 percent accurate. Since many instances of imputed ethnicities were found in which SIMS had missing ethnicity but UAPC had it recorded, the audit was able to test the accuracy of those imputations.

CUNY Central Administration imputed the ethnicities of 1,341 (21.8 percent) of the 6,146 first-time freshmen at the four sample colleges in 1999. Of these imputations, 243 (18.1 percent) had their ethnicities recorded either by UAPC (229) or by SIMS (14). The audit compared the actual and imputed ethnicities of the 243 and determined that the imputations were

67.9 percent accurate (imputed and actual ethnicity matched in 165 cases).

In 2000, CUNY Central Administration imputed the ethnicities of 1,643 (25.1 percent) of the 6,535 first-time freshmen at the four sample colleges. Of these imputations, 475 (28.9 percent) had their ethnicities recorded either by UAPC (413) or by SIMS (62). The audit compared the actual and imputed ethnicities of the 475 students and determined that the imputations were 74.9 percent accurate.

Of the 718 records in total that could be checked for accuracy of imputations, 72.6 percent were found to be correct, compared to the 77 percent accuracy rate stated by CUNY Central Administration.

### *CUNY Central Statistics May Be Based on Preliminary Data*

Although the colleges stated that the files reviewed were identical to those sent to CUNY Central Administration, that was not the case with regard to QCC. In Fall 1999, CUNY Central Administration had 62 more QCC student records than were listed by QCC. It was determined that after QCC submitted its data to CUNY Central Administration, it made corrections in SIMS. Several social security numbers were changed and other students were dropped due to non-payment. Even the initial Fall 1999 SIMS file that the audit received from QCC was an updated version and was not the version sent to CUNY Central Administration via the show registration tape. In Fall 1999, QCC had 141 records that were not recorded by CUNY Central Administration. In Fall 2000, QCC had 122 records that were not in CUNY Central Administration. In Fall 2000, Brooklyn was found to have 10 records in its files but not in CUNY Central Administration.

The statistical tables compiled by CUNY Central Administration and sent to the Department are often based on preliminary and incomplete SIMS data. The statistics would be more accurate if CUNY Central Administration would wait until later in the term when updated data are available to compile its statistics. In addition, CUNY Central Administration should obtain ethnicity data from as many sources as possible, e.g., UAPC and the ACT admission tests, prior to resorting to imputations.

## **Comments of CUNY Officials**

CUNY officials agreed with the observations made in the report, but feel that despite some problems it has accurately reported the racial composition of students. In addition, they point out that the date used to report enrollment is fixed by CUNY policy.

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## Specific Data Elements Reported to the Department

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Prior to the Board of Regents interim approval of the Amendment, CUNY submitted reports presented in tabular form containing specific data. The audit reviewed the data elements to determine if the data are accurate and whether CUNY has sufficient control systems to provide reasonable assurance that data are reliable. The following data were examined.

- Institutional Enrollment by Ethnicity for First-time Freshmen in Baccalaureate Programs in Fall 2000.
- Institutional Enrollment by Ethnicity for First-time Freshmen in Associate Degree Programs in Fall 2000.
- Fall-to-Fall Persistence Rates by Ethnicity and Number of Remedial Courses Completed by First-time, Full-time Freshmen Entering Associate Programs in Fall 1999.
- First-time Freshmen by Ethnicity Entering Associate Programs in Fall 1999 Completing All Remedial Courses.
- Assessment Test Pass Rates by Ethnicity for First-time Freshmen in Baccalaureate Programs: Fall 2000.
- Fall-to-Fall Persistence Rates by Ethnicity for First-time, Full-time Freshmen Entering Baccalaureate Programs in Fall 1999.
- First-time Freshmen Entering an Associate Program in Fall 2000 – for Students who attended College Now in 1999-2000.
- First-time Freshmen Entering a Baccalaureate Program in Fall 2000 – for Students who attended College Now in 1999-2000.

Our goal was to verify, on a sample basis, the accuracy of the following data:

- Ethnicity
- Persistence
- Assessment test scores
- The number of remedial courses taken and success in them
- College Now enrollment

## **Audit Results**

The accuracy of ethnic data, including imputations, of a sample of students was found to be high. The details are presented in the previous section.

### *Persistence Rates*

Persistence was verified for 100 percent of a sample of 299 students. Documentation was obtained from all of the colleges confirming enrollment of the sampled students in both Fall 1999 and Fall 2000.

Three of the students, although enrolled in Fall 2000, were eventually dropped from enrollment during the semester. They were included in the persistence category because enrollment data are sent from the colleges to CUNY's Office of Institutional Research as of the third week of the semester. It is misleading to include students in the persistence category who did not actually attend class in the subsequent semester.

CUNY's definition of persistence was also found to include students who were in a baccalaureate program one semester and then in an associate program the next. A case can be made to segregate these students into a separate category from those persisting on the same level or into a higher one.

### *Assessment Test Scores*

A sample of 80 students was selected. Documentation was provided to verify 100 percent of the sample students reported as "Passing all assessment tests" and "Failed one or more."

The audit determined that ESL students are automatically classified as having passed all assessment tests, although they only passed the math assessment test. ESL students do not have to pass the reading and writing assessment tests until they have completed their ESL/remediation courses. The inclusion of ESL students skews upward the number of students who passed all assessment tests. A more accurate picture of the number of students who passed all assessment tests would not include ESL students.

### *Remedial Courses*

A sample of 110 students was selected. Documentation was provided to verify that 100 percent of the sample students successfully completed all remedial courses.

### *College Now Enrollment*

The audit selected 105 students. Transcripts were obtained to confirm that 100 percent of the sample students had been enrolled in a College Now program and 100 percent enrolled in either a baccalaureate or associate degree program at CUNY.

The audit determined that 6.7 percent (7 students) of the sample, although enrolled in the College Now program, withdrew from the program. The purpose of an analysis of College Now enrollment and subsequent college enrollment is to determine the effectiveness of the College Now program. The College Now category, therefore, should only include those students who completed the program. The Dean of CUNY's Office of Institutional Research agreed. The new tables that are being prepared for the Department will only include students who completed the College Now program.

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## Fall 2000 Admissions Process at CUNY

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A flowchart (Attachment 1) was prepared by CUNY's Office of Institutional Research and Analysis for the Department's Office of Higher and Professional Education, Office of Quality Assurance. The flowchart depicts the status of the students admitted to CUNY baccalaureate programs at the seven schools subject to the 1999 Board resolution on remediation. This resolution phased out remedial course work in the CUNY baccalaureate programs as of September 2001. After that date, students seeking admission to a baccalaureate degree program must demonstrate either by appropriate scores on the SAT, ACT, Regents Exams, or CUNY's diagnostic tests, that they are prepared to handle college-level work.

The flowchart divides the 14,312 Fall 2000 applicants who were admitted to CUNY baccalaureate programs, but did not necessarily enroll, into the following categories:

- 1,797 students who were required to take an assessment test in at least one area and demonstrated proficiency by July 1, 2000;
- 7,499 students exempt from all skills tests because of Regents or SAT exam scores;
- 2,272 SEEK and ESL students admitted to a CUNY Baccalaureate program at the seven schools, subject to the resolution;
- 2,744 conditional admits who did not demonstrate proficiency by July 1, 2000.

The flowchart then follows the status of the conditional admits and identifies whether or not they passed the skills tests by August 31, 2000. For those who did not pass the skills tests by August 31, 2000, the flowchart illustrates whether they enrolled in the Prelude to Success program or not. Finally, all of the students are identified by their ultimate enrollment status.

The audit verified, on a sample basis, the accuracy of the chart. This was accomplished by verifying the accuracy of the following data:

- Reported assessment test results;
- Students reported to be enrolled in a Prelude to Success program;

- The status of applicants classified as eligible for the ESL program;
- The status of applicants classified as eligible for the SEEK program.
- Students reported to have enrolled in non-CUNY colleges.

## **Audit Results**

The flowchart depicts all of the students who were accepted into the CUNY system in Fall 2000. The first row of boxes on the flowchart shows the status of all students accepted into the program either by exemption or by the results of assessment tests. The assessment test data were found to be accurate. The audit examined 250 students' records and found that all of the assessment test results were verified. Assessment test data on the flowchart matched Skills Aptitude Test records at UAPC.

The eligibility status of the various exempt classes of applicants was also tested and found to be accurate. All of the 25 students whose records were examined were found to be eligible for the Prelude to Success program. In addition, the eligibility of all 50 of the sampled applicants classified as SEEK and/or ESL Exempt was verified by information provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis.

The flowchart shows that 1,065 of the students accepted into the CUNY system in Fall 2000 enrolled and attended non-CUNY colleges. This information was obtained by CUNY from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). The audit initially found that three of the 51 students sampled had enrolled and attended a CUNY college. CUNY's Office of Institutional Research subsequently determined that 60 additional students attended CUNY colleges but were included on the NSC list. The number of students attending non-CUNY colleges for Fall 2000 was actually 1,002, not 1,065 as reported. The audit verified the enrollment of a sample of students and found that, except for the three students who were misclassified, the students were accurately reported as enrolling in non-CUNY schools.

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## Conclusion and Opportunities to Improve

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The audit found that data submitted by CUNY are generally accurate. The areas where CUNY should consider modifying reported data are described below.

1. UAPC data are only loaded into empty SIMS fields. SIMS does not recognize discrepancies between it and UAPC. Establish policies and procedures to update ethnicity recorded as “missing” in SIMS with UAPC’s data, or generate an error message if UAPC and SIMS ethnicity records differ.
2. The statistical tables compiled by CUNY Central and sent to the Department are often based on preliminary and incomplete SIMS data. The statistics would be more accurate if CUNY Central would wait until later in the term when updated data are available to compile its statistics. In addition, CUNY Central should obtain ethnicity data from as many sources as possible, e.g., UAPC and the ACT admission tests, prior to resorting to imputations.
3. The calculation of persistence should not include students who did not attend class in the subsequent semester or students who moved from a baccalaureate program to an associate program.
4. ESL students are automatically classified as having passed all assessment tests, although they only passed the math assessment test. The inclusion of ESL students skews upward the number of students who passed all assessment tests. A more accurate picture of the number of students who passed all assessment tests would not include ESL students.
5. The classification of students as enrolled in the College Now program should only include those students who completed the program.
6. Data should be reviewed before inclusion in reports. Sixty-three of the 1,065 students reported as attending non-CUNY colleges actually attended CUNY colleges. Their names appeared on a list of colleges attended by students who were admitted to CUNY but did not attend during Fall 2000. If the list had been reviewed, these students would

not have been included on the report as students attending non-CUNY colleges.

CUNY Master Plan Amendment  
Data Verification  
Contributors to the Report

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# The City University of New York



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**OFFICE OF  
AUDIT SERVICES**

December 2, 2002

Mr. Daniel Tworek  
Director  
Office of Audit Services  
The State Education Department  
Room 524 EB  
Albany, New York 12234

Dear Mr. Tworek:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft Audit Report, dated November 18, 2002, evaluating data submitted by CUNY to the New York State Education Department in support of the University's Master Plan Amendment. In general the report accurately characterizes the reliability and validity of the data underlying reports prepared by CUNY's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. In addition, the report makes several helpful recommendations that CUNY will implement. A few problems remain, however.

p. 4 "SEEK provides counseling, remedial instruction, and tutorial services..."

SEEK students enrolled in baccalaureate programs may not take remedial instruction in course work: none is offered. SEEK students do receive a variety of forms of academic support, including tutorial services.

p. 12 "Even the initial Fall 1999 SIMS file that the audit received from QCC was an updated version and was not the version sent to SUNY Central Administration..."

Replace with 'CUNY' Central Administration.

p. 12 "The statistics would be more accurate if CUNY Central Administration would wait until later in the term when updated data are available to compile its statistics."

The information contained in any student database constantly changes to reflect student activity that continues throughout the semester. Given this flux, it is standard practice among institutions of higher education to adopt a census date for the purpose of reporting

enrollments. For more than 20 years, CUNY's official enrollment figures have reflected a census date that falls 20% of the way through the semester—the last date on which students are entitled to a refund if they withdraw from classes. In order for a student to count as part of a college's enrollment, the student must meet these attendance criteria. Colleges may not claim enrollments of students who do not meet attendance criteria and who are not reported to the CUNY Central Administration on the census date. The official figures based on this date are the accurate ones for purposes of reporting.

p. 15 "It is misleading to include students in the persistence category who did not actually attend class in the subsequent semester."

All students counted as persisters actually attend class. As pointed out in the discussion above, students must meet stringent attendance criteria in order to be counted as enrolled on CUNY's census date. The University counts students as persisters if they are officially enrolled in the subsequent semester. This methodology follows federal and New York State guidelines for the reporting of persistence rates.

p. 17 "...and demonstrated proficiency by July 12, 2000."

This should read "July 1, 2000."

Once again, I appreciate the opportunity to review the draft report. If you have any questions, please contact me at (212) 794-5414.

Sincerely,



Louise Mirrer  
Executive Vice Chancellor

c: Dean David Crook