



# Operating Practices of CUNY's College Discovery Program

### What questions did the audit look at?

- ▶ How effective is the College Discovery Program in providing academic, financial, and social support to City University of New York (CUNY) students?

### Why does it matter for New Yorkers?

CUNY is the largest urban university system in the United States, with more than 243,000 students enrolled across 25 campuses, including community colleges, senior colleges, and graduate schools.

To provide support for academically and economically disadvantaged students, CUNY established the College Discovery higher education opportunity program in 1964. Students are assigned to an academic counselor and tutoring services during their freshman year, with additional support available throughout their time in the program. College Discovery is offered at six community colleges in the CUNY system and enrolled almost 4,000 students during the audit scope period.

The audit found that College Discovery resulted in better retention rates at all six community colleges and better graduation rates at four colleges. We also conducted a survey of participants, who expressed overwhelming satisfaction with the program.

However, we found inconsistencies in the College Discovery Program. Outcomes on a college-to-college basis were not uniform and data about student inactivity was sometimes recorded inaccurately. We also found that low-GPA students and those enrolled part-time would benefit from more assistance.

College Discovery is an invaluable resource for CUNY students, providing critical support and much-needed services. CUNY should do everything in its power to ensure that it fulfills its potential.

### What changes did the agency commit to make following the audit?

- ▶ CUNY agreed to develop best practices for six community colleges and align them with its annual General Plan.
- ▶ CUNY agreed to monitor part-time student enrollment in the program more closely.
- ▶ CUNY agreed to improve its tracking of program participants so that inactivity is recorded in a timely manner.

## AUDIT FINDINGS



Retention rates were higher among College Discovery participants at all six community colleges.



Graduation rates were higher among program participants at four community colleges.



College Discovery participants have positive feelings about the program.



Participants with low cumulative GPAs were not provided adequate assistance.



Part-time students not consistently provided assistance or granted waivers.



Community colleges did not prepare or submit plans outlining academic goals of the program on an annual basis.



Audit Recommendations		Agency Response
<b>1</b>	Develop best practices to be applied in all six CUNY community colleges, including aligned General Plans for each fiscal year.	<b>AGREED</b>
<b>2</b>	Consider conducting surveys of College Discovery Program students on a periodic basis to help determine the effectiveness of the program and identify areas for improvement.	<b>AGREED</b>
<b>3</b>	Develop mechanisms to more closely monitor the cumulative GPAs of College Discovery Program students that fall below 2.0 and develop plans for these students to obtain support services.	<b>AGREED</b>
<b>4</b>	Consider requiring the use of a formal agreement between a counselor and an academic probationary student.	<b>AGREED</b>
<b>5</b>	More closely monitor the part-time enrollment status of the College Discovery Program students so that: (1) required waivers are obtained; (2) the waivers include plans to help students stay on track to graduate; and (3) the students receive the counseling and tutoring needed to help them graduate on time (i.e., within seven terms).	<b>AGREED</b>
<b>6</b>	Ensure that the date a student becomes inactive in the College Discovery Program is accurately recorded in CUNYfirst in a timely manner.	<b>AGREED</b>

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