



# **Pathways Initiative Year Six Review**

**The City University of New York  
Office of Academic Affairs**

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As would be expected, given the complex and far-reaching scope of the Pathways Initiative, this Year Six review brought together many contributors. In addition to faculty and administrators from CUNY campuses, Central Office staff, and representatives of the University Faculty Senate and the University Student Senate, the work has had the benefit both of previous assessments and several related efforts described in the report.

Additionally, the latter half of the process took place during the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, with everyone involved working remotely. The fact that the report was completed not only on time, but also with a remarkable degree of consensus, speaks to the commitment of each participant to ensuring that the University's general education requirements and the goal of more effective student transfer amidst the CUNY colleges, as represented by Pathways, remained foremost amidst their many responsibilities.

We are deeply grateful to the members of the CUNY Pathways Year Six Evaluation Task Force, unfailingly probing, diligent, and collegial. We wish to especially acknowledge the contributions of Senior University Dean for Academic Programs and Policy, Dr. Lucinda Zoe, and Curriculum and Research Analyst, CUNY Central Office of Academic Affairs, Dr. Erin Croke, the principal author of the report. Their knowledge of the history and processes involved in Pathways, accompanied by their provocative questions, proved invaluable. Finally, we wish to thank Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost, Dr. José Luis Cruz, for the opportunity to lead the Task Force.

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# Pathways Initiative

## Year Six Review

### Executive Summary

This report of the CUNY Pathways Year Six Evaluation Task Force addresses issues that are critical in understanding how much progress has been registered towards the goals of this major initiative. The report concludes that the progress is both substantial and enduring.

The first objective of the review was to develop a comprehensive understanding of how the Pathways curricular structure and transfer guarantees relate to student momentum. Pathways was designed to limit the amount of credit loss toward degree requirements that students experience upon transfer. Findings indicate the following:

- Pathways has not resulted in a large shift in the number of students who choose to transfer from associate programs early. The overall number of transfer students into baccalaureate programs has increased between Fall 2012 and Fall 2019, with the largest share of this increase among transfer students with the associate degree. Over this time period there was an increase of 57 percent in the number of transfer students with the associate degree, compared to an increase of 22 percent among those without the associate degree. There was just a 6 percent increase in the number of transfer students without the associate degree and less than 30 credits.
- The average time to degree for baccalaureate graduates declined between 2009-10 and 2018-19. This decline occurred for students who began at the college as first-time freshmen, as well as for students who transferred to the college with an AA, AS, or AAS degree.
- Between 2009-10 and 2018-19 the average number of excess credits for baccalaureate graduates remained flat at approximately 10 excess credits. Data about excess credits should be interpreted with caution, as local college practices related to transfer credit acceptance may have changed due to Pathways policy that all credits must be accepted for transfer.
- Analysis of DegreeWorks data suggests that CUNY students who transfer now have a larger amount of transfer coursework applied toward degree requirements at the receiving college. For example, each transfer student in Fall 2012 had, on average, 5.5 courses applied to degree requirements at the receiving college, while each transfer student in Fall 2019 had 7.0 courses applied to degree requirements. In Fall 2012 approximately 35.4 percent of transfer courses applied toward general education, major, or minor requirements, while in Fall 2019 this had increased to 74.2 percent. Although this analysis is not conclusive, this large increase may be attributable to the implementation of the Pathways general education framework for all undergraduate students and Pathways policies related to transfer credit acceptance.
- Findings indicate the number of credits applied toward students' College Option requirements at senior colleges is consistent with Pathways policy, with small observed deviations within reason. The transfer guarantees for College Option courses are functioning for students who transfer from one baccalaureate college to another. Among students who transferred from one

baccalaureate college to another, only 5.3 percent had completed the College Option requirement in full prior to transfer.

- The Pathways transfer guarantees for Gateway Majors are working properly, although possible issues with some of the Gateway Majors require further analysis. Approximately 82 percent of all Gateway Courses into Majors transferred as equivalent to another Gateway Course at the receiving college, while an additional 14 percent transferred as equivalent to a non-Gateway Course at the receiving college. Less than 1 percent of these courses transferred for blanket elective credit.
- Despite these strong indicators of the effectiveness of Pathways, a few issues remain. In some cases, local campus policies conflict with Pathways policies and inhibit student momentum. Preliminary analysis suggests some students fulfill writing intensive course requirements without meeting other requirements for the major or general education simultaneously, a violation of Pathways policy. In these cases, the writing intensive requirements add to the total credits required for graduation. Campus residency requirements represent another local policy that may limit the applicability of transfer coursework. Other campus-based policies may also violate Pathways, such as a limit on the acceptance of transfer credits from other CUNY colleges.

The review also examined how students experience Pathways policies and the curriculum. Pathways was designed to clarify degree requirements by implementing University-wide curricular frameworks that inform students about their ultimate paths to degree completion. Additional data is needed to understand how students experience Pathways, but preliminary findings include the following:

- Data collected through CUNY's Transfer Opportunity Project (TOP)<sup>1</sup> show there is a need to better inform faculty and staff about issues related to student transfer. As reported by Logue & Gentsch (2020),<sup>2</sup> results from the TOP staff survey suggest that at both associate and bachelor's colleges, faculty, compared to staff, are less confident in their understanding of University policies related to transfer and in their use of transfer software. Faculty at both types of institutions were also more likely than staff to report that they never or rarely communicated with other offices at the college about transfer. Faculty at the associate colleges were especially likely to be concerned that students encounter difficulty with the transfer of credits, although the topic of credit transfer is not uniformly covered in academic advisement sessions at associate colleges.
- In collaboration with CUNY, MDRC's Center for Applied Behavioral Sciences (CABS) worked with six partner CUNY colleges in 2019 to collect detailed data about every aspect of the student enrollment and transfer process through interviews and focus groups with students and staff.<sup>3</sup> The goal of the data collection was to identify barriers that students who begin in community colleges with the goal of attaining a bachelor's degree may encounter along their educational journey, and surface promising practices colleges are already using to improve the transfer student experience. MDRC makes two central recommendations to reduce the barriers students

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<sup>1</sup> The City University of New York. A2B (Associate's to Bachelor's Degree Transfers). (n.d.). *Transfer Opportunity Project*. <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/oira/policy/a2b/top/>

<sup>2</sup> Logue, A.W. & Gentsch, K. (2020, February 6). *Survey of staff at 19 colleges: Services that help and hinder transfer student success*. Presentation at NISTS 2020 Annual Conference. <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/oira/policy/a2b/research/NISTStaffSurveyLogue.020320.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Condliffe, B. & Sutcliffe, S. (forthcoming). *Barriers and opportunities to improve transfer student experiences (working paper)*. MDRC.

experience related to transfer.<sup>4</sup> First, mechanisms for student advisement must more strategically and consistently incorporate support for students who plan to transfer. Second, CUNY must better bridge the gap between institutions for students who transfer.

- The Pathways curricular framework is flexible, allowing students to take a broad array of courses from different disciplines. Shifts in course taking across disciplines may be related to trends that are unrelated to Pathways. Between 2012-13 and 2018-19, there were declines in course taking among both first-time freshmen and all undergraduate students in the arts, education, history, and nursing. There was also a decline in undergraduate course taking in the humanities, although this decline did not occur among first-time freshmen during their first year. Course taking in ethnic studies, computer science, natural sciences, and social sciences increased among both first-time freshmen and undergraduates overall. The proportion of students taking foreign language courses has remained steady.
- A project was conducted in April-May 2020 to evaluate whether the Common Core student learning outcomes (SLOs) have been uniformly communicated at the course level. A total of 303 syllabi of approved general education courses were evaluated. Overall, 46 percent of the syllabi included all SLOs, and 43 percent included assignments clearly associated with the SLOs. Results varied among the Common Core areas, and among colleges and departments.

Finally, the Task Force assessed progress toward two key recommendations made through the Year Three review, including transparency of the Common Core course review process, and the student appeals process related to denial or restriction of transfer credit.

- A survey of members of the Common Core Course Review Committee (CCCRC) suggests members have a favorable view of the committee. More awareness is needed among faculty about how to develop successful Common Core course proposals; colleges must take additional time to build thoughtful, clear, and detailed submissions; and communication should be improved between the Central Office of Academic Affairs and the colleges, the CCCRC and colleges, and within the colleges.
- In March-May 2020, the Central Office of Academic Affairs surveyed the Pathways appeals officers (campus staff specifically assigned to handle Pathways appeals), and received responses from 16 colleges. Just three colleges have separate webpages with specific information about the Pathways appeals process and contact information. There is significant variability in the number of appeals processed at each college. Ten of the 16 colleges indicated they did not receive any appeals during the three academic years. Three colleges reported that approximately 10-20 appeals were received in each of the three years. The remaining three colleges processed a substantial number of appeals over the three-year period. Interestingly, two of the colleges with a substantial number of student appeals have transparent, student-friendly Pathways appeals webpages.

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<sup>4</sup> These recommendations generally align with prior studies that issue recommendations regarding student transfer at CUNY, including: Eller, C.C. (2017). *Increasing success for two-to-four-year transfer students within The City University of New York*. GraduateNYC. <http://bit.ly/2mGe6r5>; Wyner, J., Deane, K.C., Jenkins, D., Fink, J. (2016). *The transfer playbook: Essential practices for two-and four-year colleges*. The Aspen Institute and Community College Research Center. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED565894.pdf>

The Task Force makes specific recommendations to improve implementation of Pathways, summarized below:

- Analyze current implementation of the existing Pathways Gateway Majors, develop campus-specific action items to improve implementation, and increase the number of participating Pathways Gateway Majors.
- Review campus policies such as overlay requirements, residency requirements, and acceptance of transfer credit to ensure CUNY students do not encounter inconsistent policies or barriers as they pursue their degrees.
- Take steps to improve the student experience of transfer and gather additional data from students about the implementation of Pathways.
- Widely publicize the student appeals process at the campus level to improve awareness of the right to appeal the denial or restriction of transfer credit; the process should adhere to CUNY standards, definitions, and tracking procedures.
- Ensure that student learning outcomes (SLOs) for Pathways courses are included on course syllabi. Additionally, it is recommended that campuses assess the alignment between the Pathways SLOs and course assignments and activities that are designed to address the SLOs.
- Bolster support of those who serve on the Common Core Course Review Committee (CCCRC), improve awareness of the course review process on the campuses, and strengthen communication.
- Plan for the next scheduled review of Pathways. The Pathways Common Core framework and the SLOs should be examined at that time in light of current needs.

# Pathways Initiative

## Year Six Review

The June 2011 Board of Trustees resolution that created the Pathways Initiative stipulated that Pathways policies and processes be reviewed and evaluated each year for three years beginning in 2013, and every three years thereafter, to modify them as necessary to improve them or to meet changing needs. The following report represents the required Year Six evaluation of Pathways.

A CUNY-wide Task Force, charged by Dr. José Luis Cruz, Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost, conducted the Pathways Year Six Review. The Task Force was co-chaired by Dr. Bonne August, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at New York City College of Technology, and Dr. Ernest Ialongo, Professor of History, Hostos Community College and member of the University Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee.

The primary objective of the review was to focus on research questions that are critical in understanding how much progress has been registered towards the goals of this major initiative.

## BACKGROUND

Transfer flow among CUNY's undergraduate colleges has historically represented a major opportunity offered by the University. At the same time, transfer has been the source of a persistent problem, as historically transfer students have faced difficulties in the application of their transfer credits toward degree requirements. Each of the 19 undergraduate colleges of CUNY maintained its own unique general education and major requirements, and acceptance of transfer credits was based on whether the courses were deemed equivalent to courses required by the receiving college. The Pathways Initiative was designed to address this problem.

With substantial student transfer flows among the undergraduate colleges, the scale and scope of problems with transfer credit acceptance toward degree requirements was significant. Approximately 60 percent of students entering CUNY baccalaureate programs are transfer students, while 40 percent are first-time freshmen.<sup>5</sup> Students transfer in all directions within the CUNY system. The CUNY Office of Policy Research (2019) reports that the largest flow is students transferring between the associate and baccalaureate programs, with 12,156 such transfers in 2011-12. However, 3,572 students transferred between associate programs, 3,354 students transferred between baccalaureate programs, and 2,168 students transferred from baccalaureate to associate programs.<sup>6</sup>

CUNY is a single university per New York State education law and is required to maintain clear transfer paths and curricular alignment across the colleges.<sup>7</sup> To study issues related to student transfer and to develop recommendations, in Fall 2008 CUNY's Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost at that

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<sup>5</sup> The City University of New York. Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. *Year Six Pathways data set*.

<sup>6</sup> The City University of New York. Office of Policy Research. (2019, January 14). *What we know about transfer students at CUNY*. Bronx Transfer Alliance Group Meeting. <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/oira/policy/a2b/research/>

<sup>7</sup> New York State Education Law Section 6201. <https://codes.findlaw.com/ny/education-law/edn-sect-6201.html>

time, Dr. Alexandra Logue, convened the Working Group on Transfer and Articulation. The findings and recommendations of the working group were presented in a report, “Improving Student Transfer at CUNY,” by Julia Wrigley, issued October 22, 2010.<sup>8</sup> Many of the recommendations included in the report were approved in the June 2011 Board of Trustees Resolution on Creating an Efficient Transfer System, or the Pathways Resolution.<sup>9</sup>

As stated in the Board Resolution, Pathways set forth three important goals. The goals of Pathways are as follows:

1. *“To enhance transfer students’ progress toward degree completion, CUNY must insure that students’ credits earned from any CUNY college transfer smoothly and efficiently to all other CUNY colleges.”*

To streamline transfer students’ progress toward degree completion, the Resolution addressed the three components of the curriculum – general education, major, and elective requirements. The Resolution set forth a 30-credit Common Core requirement for all undergraduate students in AA, AS, and baccalaureate programs. See Table 1 for an overview of the Common Core structure. Once a general education requirement is completed, it is guaranteed to transfer for credit toward general education requirements of the same type at other CUNY colleges.

**TABLE 1 PATHWAYS GENERAL EDUCATION COMMON CORE REQUIREMENT**

General Education	Number of Credits	Number of Courses
<b>Areas of Required Common Core</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>
English Composition	6	2
Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning	3	1
Life and Physical Sciences	3	1
<b>Areas of Flexible Common Core</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>
World Cultures and Global Issues	3	1
U.S. Experience in Its Diversity	3	1
Creative Expression	3	1
Individual and Society	3	1
Scientific World	3	1
One additional course from any one of the five areas above	3	1

Students in baccalaureate programs are required to complete additional general education requirements known as the “College Option.” All students who begin college in a bachelor’s program are required to complete 12 College Option credits, for a total of 42 general education credits required. Once a College Option requirement is fulfilled, it remains fulfilled upon transfer

<sup>8</sup> Wrigley, J. (2010, October 22). *Improving student transfer at CUNY*. The City University of New York. Office of Academic Affairs. <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/about/archive/archive/TransferReport.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The City University of New York. (2011, June 27). *Resolution on creating an efficient transfer system*. <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/about/policies/EffectiveTransferSystemReso.pdf>

to a different CUNY college. For example, if a student enrolls at Queens College and completes 6 College Option credits, upon transfer to Lehman College the student would have 6 remaining College Option credits to complete, for a total of 12 credits. Students who transfer from an associate to a bachelor's program must complete between 6 and 12 College Option credits upon transfer, for a total of between 36 and 42 total general education credits required. The differentiated College Option requirement for students transferring from associate degree programs is as follows: 6 College Option credits are required for students who earned an AA, AS, or AAS degree; 9 College Option credits are required for students who earned more than 30 credits in the associate degree program but did not obtain the degree; 12 College Option credits are required for students who earned 30 or fewer credits in the associate degree program.

The Resolution requires cross-college faculty committees in popular majors to determine three to six entry-level requirements in the major that are guaranteed to transfer for credit toward the major at any CUNY college offering the major. Finally, the Resolution requires that all credits earned at one CUNY college be accepted for credit at any other CUNY college.

2. *"Integral to this resolution is CUNY's commitment to the highest academic standards and to the faculty's special responsibility for courses and curriculum."*

Faculty are responsible for the design, selection, and approval of all course offerings for general education and the major gateways. The curricular areas for the 30-credit Common Core are defined by student learning outcomes. A faculty committee, known as the Common Core Course Review Committee (CCCRC), is tasked with the review and approval of all courses offered in the Common Core.

3. *"Also integral to this resolution is a commitment to providing colleges with the flexibility to maintain their distinctive identities and traditions."*

Course offerings available in the Common Core vary across campuses based on the specific priorities and areas of expertise within each campus. Each CUNY college selects the types of requirements and courses that are offered within the College Option, and offerings vary widely. For example, Hunter College requires that students achieve fourth-semester proficiency in a foreign language. Hunter students who have already reached this level of proficiency are required to take courses in a concentrated area of study outside their first major. John Jay requires students to take history, communications, and two courses from the "Justice Core."

### **Pathways Implementation**

Pathways, now fully implemented across the CUNY undergraduate colleges, has greatly improved the ease and efficiency of student transfer between colleges. In Fall 2018, 97 percent of all degree-seeking undergraduate students were following the Pathways general education framework. More than 2,000 courses have been approved for the Pathways Common Core by the CCCRC. More than 500 "STEM variant" math and science courses (courses colleges require for majors in STEM fields) are offered in the Common Core. The CCCRC continues to review and approve courses on an ongoing basis. Currently, 36

faculty members serve on the committee. Additionally, each baccalaureate college developed its own 12-credit College Option general education requirements.

Faculty committees identified common entry-level courses in 10 popular majors – biology, business, criminal justice, economics, English, nursing, political science, psychology, sociology, and teacher education. More than 600 courses have been identified by colleges offering these majors and are guaranteed to transfer for credit toward the majors.

## **PRIOR REVIEWS OF THE PATHWAYS INITIATIVE**

The CUNY Central Office of Academic Affairs has facilitated ongoing evaluation of Pathways since its inception in Fall 2013. Comprehensive reports were released with results from the Year Two and Year Three evaluations, and annual data sets were also produced in Years Four and Five.

### **Year One Review**

Interim Chancellor William P. Kelly oversaw the Year One review of Pathways, completed in February 2014.<sup>10</sup> The review focused on implementation issues. The review committee included representatives from the University Faculty Senate and other faculty members from the natural sciences, English, and the humanities.

As a result of the review, three changes were made. First, the restriction on the number of contact hours for Common Core courses was eliminated. Second, the committee reiterated that colleges may seek Pathways waivers from the Central Office of Academic Affairs for degree programs that cannot accommodate the Pathways curricular structure. Third, the committee required that faculty selected to serve on the Common Core Course Review Committee must be chosen through college governance procedures.

### **Year Two Review**

In May 2015 a faculty review committee was convened by Interim Vice Chancellor Julia Wrigley to review policies and available data after completion of the second full year of Pathways implementation.<sup>11</sup> The committee included representatives from the University Faculty Senate and a variety of colleges and academic disciplines. Feedback was also solicited from Pathways liaisons (representatives at each college), and through an online public suggestion form.

The committee posed a variety of questions, such as whether there had been changes since Pathways implementation in course-taking patterns across disciplines, student retention, rates of student transfer, or academic performance indicators such as average GPA and credit attainment. Questions were also raised about the proportion of undergraduate courses taught by full-time faculty and about the

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<sup>10</sup> The City University of New York. Office of Academic Affairs. (2014, February 3). *Pathways first-year review*. <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/Year-One-College-Presidents-and-Deans-ADA.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> The City University of New York. Office of Academic Affairs. (2016, September 20). *Pathways second-year review*. [https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/PathwaysYearTwoMemoandDataVCR\\_Sept-22-2016-ADA.pdf](https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/PathwaysYearTwoMemoandDataVCR_Sept-22-2016-ADA.pdf)

frequency that courses taken at the sending college transferred as meeting College Option requirements at the receiving college.

Analyses showed there had been an increase in student transfer into the baccalaureate programs. Other measures, such as course taking by discipline and student performance had remained stable. Preliminary data from DegreeWorks showed that transfer courses accounted for approximately 18 percent of College Option course requirement fulfillment in the senior colleges.

### **Year Three Review**

The Central Office of Academic Affairs compiled the Year Three evaluation with contributions from the Year Two faculty review team, the chairs and faculty members of the Common Core Course Review Committee (CCCRC), the college Pathways appeals officers, and student focus group participants.<sup>12</sup>

Student focus groups were conducted by an independent consultant. More than half of all students, 56 percent, said they were “very familiar” with their general education requirements. However, just 7 percent said they were “very familiar” with the course transfer guarantees, and 30 percent answered “don’t know anything” about the transfer guarantees. Students’ responses during the focus group sessions indicated knowledge of the Major Gateway courses might be especially limited. However, the majority of focus group participants had majors that do not participate in the Pathways Major Gateway plan.

In June and July 2016, the Central Office of Academic Affairs surveyed 18 CUNY colleges regarding their student appeals processes and outcomes since the implementation of Pathways. Colleges were asked about their Pathways appeals websites for students, their appeals processes and tracking systems, the numbers and types of appeals they received, and problems and issues they encountered.

Finally, the CCCRC chairs worked with their subcommittees to review and assess the course review process. While the CCCRC agreed that the review process resulted in greater confidence in the overall quality of the curriculum at the colleges, the subcommittees provided several recommendations to increase transparency, better communicate requirements for course approval to faculty, and better orient members of the CCCRC about the scope of work.

Based on results of the Year Three review, recommendations were made as follows:

- Ensure proper and consistent implementation of Pathways policies across all undergraduate colleges.
- Improve student communications to better inform students about their general education requirements, the Pathways transfer guarantees, and the transfer credit appeals process.
- Improve transparency of the Common Core course review and approval process to provide better guidance to faculty.
- Continue to evaluate student course taking across disciplines to understand effects of the Pathways curricular structure.
- Improve the student appeals process by creating a University-wide definition of “Pathways appeals” and develop a consistent appeals tracking system. Each college should establish a clear

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<sup>12</sup> The City University of New York. Office of Academic Affairs. (2017, September). *Pathways general education initiative year-three review*. <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/Pathways-Third-YearReview-and-Memo-FINAL-REVISED-2017.pdf>

Pathways appeals process, convene an appeals review committee, and ensure students understand the process.

- Continue to evaluate students' fulfillment of College Option requirements.
- Improve transfers within majors by increasing the number of Pathways Gateway Majors.

Following completion of the Year Three review, the Central Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) took the following steps:

- Updated the Pathways Campus Guidelines document to clarify important issues and ensure proper implementation of Pathways policies.
- Issued memos to campuses regarding implementation of the Pathways Common Core framework in Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree programs. OAA recommended that general education coursework remain unspecified in order to provide flexibility to students and ensure that students transferring into such programs are not required to retake specific general education courses.
- Created and shared a series of instructional videos for students about the CUNY curriculum, the Pathways general education curriculum, and transfer credit policies.
- Improved transparency of the CCCRC process by developing written guidelines and sample submissions and by encouraging direct consultations between CCCRC chairs and faculty to provide feedback when course submissions were not approved. Regular course review cycles were created, with specific deadlines and dates when decisions would be provided, enabling the colleges to plan better. In addition to offering an orientation for CCCRC members at the beginning of each two-year term, CCCRC chairs were encouraged to remind committee members of the scope of work.
- Worked with CUNY's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) to create annual Pathways datasets to track indicators such as course taking by discipline, transfer rates, and academic success indicators such as average GPA, credit attainment, and graduation rates.
- Created a University-wide definition of a Pathways student appeal and provided instructions and a tracking sheet to campus appeals officers.
- Completed an in-depth analysis of College Option requirements, student fulfillment of these requirements, and College Option course transfer.

## **TASK FORCE**

In November 2019, Dr. José Luis Cruz, Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost, invited members to serve on the CUNY Pathways Year Six Evaluation Task Force. Four Task Force meetings were convened between December 2019 and May 2020. The Task Force completed a review of existing data and resources related to Pathways, developed research questions, and oversaw data analysis and the development of recommendations. The Central OAA members of the group executed the work as directed by the Task Force, consulted with campus-based subject-matter experts in areas such as student assessment, and prepared the findings. In May 2020 this summary report was refined and presented to the Executive Vice Chancellor for consideration.

The Task Force included the following members:

#### *Task Force Co-Chairs*

- Dr. Bonne August, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs, New York City College of Technology
- Dr. Ernest Ialongo, Professor of History, Hostos Community College; UFS Academic Affairs Committee

#### *Task Force Members*

- Hussein Abdul, University Student Senate, Lehman College
- Dr. Lubie Alatraste, New York City College of Technology, Chair of the UFS Academic Affairs Committee
- Dr. Marva Craig, Vice President for Student Affairs, Borough of Manhattan Community College
- Dr. Bart Grachan, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs/EM, LaGuardia Community College
- Dr. Anne Lopes, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, Brooklyn College
- Dr. Dean Savage, Queens College
- Dr. Howard Wach, Vice President and Provost of Academic Affairs, Guttman Community College

#### *Task Force Staff*

- Dr. Erin Croke, Curriculum and Research Analyst, Central OAA
- Karen Kapp, University Director of Academic Planning & Administration, Central OAA
- Stephen Sheets, Data Analyst, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
- Vivek Upadhyay, University Registrar, Central OAA/EM
- Dr. Mari Watanabe-Rose, Director of Undergraduate Education Initiatives & Research, Central OAA
- Dr. Lucinda Zoe, Senior University Dean for Academic Programs and Policy, Central OAA

## **OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In September 2019, input was solicited on the objectives and process for completing the Pathways Year Six evaluation. Based on feedback received, the Task Force refined the objectives and specific research questions. Suggestions were also offered related to the structure of the Task Force. In response to these suggestions, a student representative was added.

The first objective of the review was to develop a comprehensive understanding of how the Pathways curricular structure and transfer guarantees relate to student momentum. Pathways was designed to limit the amount of credit loss toward degree requirements that students experience upon transfer.

Key research questions include:

- What is the status of student transfer into baccalaureate degrees, time-to-degree completion of baccalaureate graduates, and excess credits at the time of graduation among baccalaureate graduates?
- Do credits that students have completed prior to transfer apply toward degree requirements as a result of the Pathways transfer guarantees and the standardized curricular frameworks?
- Do all three elements of the Pathways curricular structure (Common Core, College Option, and Gateway Courses into Majors) allow transfer students to make steady degree progress?

- Do campus-based policies, such as course equivalency rules, residency requirements, or requirements that students complete overlay requirements, such as writing intensive courses, impact student momentum?

Second, the review examined how students experience Pathways. Pathways was designed to clarify degree requirements by implementing University-wide curricular frameworks that inform students about their ultimate paths to degree completion. The student learning outcomes (SLOs) for the Common Core areas also impact how students experience the curriculum.

Data was examined to answer the following research questions:

- What are the barriers that students continue to experience related to transfer, and how can Pathways be implemented more effectively to alleviate these barriers?
- How do students experience the curriculum across disciplinary fields? Have patterns of course taking across disciplines changed since Pathways was implemented?
- Are Pathways SLOs consistently implemented at the course level?

Third, the Task Force collected additional data to assess progress toward two key recommendations made through the Year Three review. These analyses are based on the following research questions:

- As stipulated in the Resolution, have appeals processes been established on each campus for students who wish to appeal the denial or restriction of transfer credit? Are the appeals processes widely publicized and accessible to students?
- Is the Common Core course review process sufficiently transparent regarding the criteria, process, and timeline for course approvals?

The Task Force also briefly discussed topics that were outside the immediate scope of the Year Six Review, but could be examined at a later date. These include a review of the ePermit process, student access to selective academic programs such as nursing, and the influence of Pathways on financial aid.

## **DATA SOURCES AND METHODS**

To gather data relevant to the research questions, analyses were conducted by CUNY's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) using data from the Institutional Research Database and DegreeWorks. CUNY's Office of Undergraduate Studies also conducted analyses using these data sources, as well as reviews of campus policies.

DegreeWorks is a system used CUNY-wide by students, advisors, faculty, and administrators to monitor degree progress, verify completion of degree requirements, and certify financial aid. Student degree audits available from the DegreeWorks database contain information about students' progress, including unique sequences of courses and application of courses toward degree requirements. Only by using DegreeWorks data is it possible to conclude that a specific course applied to a particular portion of a student's degree requirements—Pathways Common Core, Pathways College Option, major, or electives. DegreeWorks data is updated in real time, and therefore analysis based on this data represents a snapshot in time.

Existing reports and data were also used for this report. In particular, data from the CUNY Transfer Opportunity Project<sup>13</sup> informed the Task Force’s understanding of ongoing challenges faced by transfer students. Finally, data was collected through cross-campus CUNY committees such as the CUNY Assessment Council and the Common Core Course Review Committee (CCCRC).

## FINDINGS

### Pathways and Student Momentum

A major goal of Pathways is to smooth the path toward graduation for transfer students by creating a common curricular structure for general education, common entry-level coursework for popular majors at all colleges offering the majors, and guarantees that credits will transfer toward degree requirements. To assess the effectiveness of Pathways toward improving student momentum, the Task Force examined rates of student transfer into baccalaureate programs, time to degree of baccalaureate graduates, and excess credits at the time of graduation for baccalaureate graduates. The Task Force also examined the transferability of coursework, including coursework taken to fulfill Common Core, College Option, and Major Gateway requirements. Campus-based curricular policies that may inhibit student momentum were also reviewed.

The analyses presented in the sections below were completed by the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) and Office of Undergraduate Studies using data from CUNYfirst, the Institutional Research Database (IRDB), DegreeWorks, and college catalogs.

#### *Trends in Transfer into CUNY Baccalaureate Programs*

A key aspect of student momentum is transfer to the senior colleges. OIRA completed an analysis of transfer students entering CUNY baccalaureate programs between Fall 2012 and Fall 2019 including students with the associate degree, without the associate degree, without the associate degree with 30 or more credits, without the associate degree with less than 30 credits, from another baccalaureate program, from another CUNY program but stopped out for more than three years, from a certificate program, and from outside CUNY. This analysis is helpful in understanding changes in the rate of transfer student groups since prior to the implementation of Pathways in Fall 2013.

Table 2 shows that the overall number of transfer students into baccalaureate programs has increased over this time period, from 13,612 transfer students in Fall 2012 to 15,708 transfer students in Fall 2019. The largest share of this increase has been among transfer students with the associate degree. Between Fall 2012 and Fall 2019 there was an increase of 57 percent in the number of transfer students with the associate degree, compared to an increase of 22 percent among those without the associate degree. There was an increase of 6 percent in the number of transfer students without the associate degree and less than 30 credits. This suggests that Pathways has not resulted in a large shift in the number of students who choose to transfer from associate programs early. Over this time period there was a 19 percent decline in the number of transfer students from outside CUNY.

The proportion of transfer students from outside CUNY declined from 40.3 percent in Fall 2012 to 28.4 percent in Fall 2019. As a proportion of all transfer students entering CUNY baccalaureate programs,

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<sup>13</sup> The City University of New York. A2B (Associate’s to Bachelor’s Degree Transfers). (n.d.). *Transfer Opportunity Project*. <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/oira/policy/a2b/top/>

students who transferred with the associate degree increased from 29.4 percent of the transfer student body in Fall 2012, to 40.1 percent of the transfer student body in Fall 2019.

**TABLE 2. TRENDS IN TRANSFERS INTO CUNY BACCALAUREATE PROGRAMS**

Transfer Type	Fall 2012		Fall 2013		Fall 2014		Fall 2015		Fall 2016		Fall 2017		Fall 2018		Fall 2019	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
With Associate Degree	3,999	29.4	4,234	30.3	5,006	32.6	5,423	33.8	5,714	35.6	5,617	34.7	5,879	37.2	6,298	40.1
Without Associate Degree	1,737	12.8	1,862	13.3	2,218	14.4	2,269	14.1	2,319	14.5	2,270	14.0	2,168	13.7	2,126	13.5
≥ 30 Credits	1,414	10.4	1,495	10.7	1,731	11.3	1,780	11.1	1,894	11.8	1,846	11.4	1,809	11.4	1,784	11.4
< 30 Credits	323	2.4	367	2.6	487	3.2	489	3.0	425	2.6	424	2.6	359	2.3	342	2.2
From Baccalaureate Program	1,519	11.2	1,553	11.1	1,802	11.7	1,826	11.4	1,859	11.6	1,787	11.0	1,707	10.8	1,906	12.1
From CUNY More than 3 Years*	836	6.1	808	5.8	867	5.6	977	6.1	941	5.9	1,042	6.4	944	6.0	901	5.7
From Certificate	33	0.2	12	0.1	9	0.1	17	0.1	11	0.1	11	0.1	15	0.1	14	0.1
Outside CUNY	5,488	40.3	5,483	39.3	5,464	35.6	5,537	34.5	5,197	32.4	5,445	33.7	5,102	32.3	4,463	28.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,612</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>13,952</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>15,366</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>16,049</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>16,041</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>16,172</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>15,815</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>15,708</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*Consists of students enrolling as a transfer student in the fall semester more than three years since their last enrollment at CUNY.

Note: Data for the fall 2019 cohort are preliminary.

SOURCE: CUNY OIRA

### *Trends in the Time to Degree of Baccalaureate Graduates*

OIRA also completed an analysis of the average time to degree at the degree granting college for baccalaureate graduates between 2009-10 and 2018-19. Table 3 presents the average time to degree for those who transferred to the college with the AA/AS degree, for those who transferred to the college with the AAS degree, for those who transferred from an associate program with no degree, and for first-time freshmen.

The average time to degree has declined among first-time freshmen and among students who transferred to the college with an AA, AS, or AAS degree. The time to degree has not declined for students who transfer without an associate degree.

Among transfer students, those with the longest time to degree are those who transferred without the degree, most likely because this group transferred with fewer credits, on average, than those who transferred with a degree. Among students who transferred with the degree, those who arrived with an AAS degree took longer to graduate than those who transferred with an AA or AS degree.

**TABLE 3. TRENDS IN THE TIME TO DEGREE OF BACCALAUREATE GRADUATES**

Academic Year	Transfers with the AA/AS Degree		Transfers with the AAS Degree		Transfers from Assoc No Degree		First-time Freshmen	
	Graduates	Years to Degree	Graduates	Years to Degree	Graduates	Years to Degree	Graduates	Years to Degree
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
2009-2010	2,539	2.79	1,325	3.06	2,631	3.19	6,049	4.50
2010-2011	2,736	2.82	1,497	3.04	2,929	3.25	6,590	4.51
2011-2012	2,937	2.78	1,446	2.96	3,092	3.32	6,973	4.51
2012-2013	3,412	2.81	1,592	2.92	3,091	3.38	7,275	4.49
2013-2014	3,686	2.65	1,663	2.78	3,060	3.42	7,161	4.49
2014-2015	3,933	2.66	1,611	2.86	3,012	3.40	7,058	4.48
2015-2016	4,436	2.59	1,681	2.75	3,164	3.32	7,254	4.44
2016-2017	5,014	2.55	1,610	2.82	3,206	3.25	7,421	4.40
2017-2018	5,622	2.55	1,719	2.72	3,274	3.18	7,513	4.35
2018-2019	6,553	2.54	1,706	2.71	3,373	3.18	8,020	4.30

Note: Excludes the time to degree of graduates taking more than 12 years to complete a baccalaureate degree. Columns based on transfers only include internal transfers within CUNY.

SOURCE: CUNY OIRA

Table 4 presents the average time to degree of all baccalaureate graduates, regardless of entry type, by college. The colleges serve different student populations and offer different types of degree programs, which results in variance in the time to degree by college. For example, the School of Professional Studies primarily serves transfer students, resulting in a lower average time to degree compared to other colleges. The average time to degree decreased or remained approximately the same between 2011-12 and 2018-19 at all colleges.

**TABLE 4. TRENDS IN THE TIME TO DEGREE OF BACCALAUREATE GRADUATES, BY COLLEGE**

College	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
	Years							
Baruch	3.58	3.46	3.41	3.34	3.20	3.17	3.14	3.05
Brooklyn	3.61	3.61	3.44	3.35	3.27	3.32	3.18	3.13
City	4.09	4.07	4.07	3.87	3.79	3.76	3.65	3.57
Hunter	3.84	3.80	3.63	3.59	3.62	3.58	3.57	3.55
John Jay	3.36	3.30	3.25	3.27	3.17	3.20	3.13	3.06
Lehman	3.54	3.60	3.39	3.38	3.24	3.31	3.08	3.13
Medgar Evers	3.60	3.93	3.88	3.82	3.64	3.55	3.54	3.52
NYCCT	2.97	2.91	2.97	3.03	2.97	3.00	3.02	3.04
Queens	3.50	3.53	3.47	3.49	3.39	3.36	3.34	3.44
Staten Island	3.43	3.59	3.74	3.80	3.91	3.73	3.73	3.56
York	4.06	4.06	4.04	4.09	4.12	3.96	4.01	3.79
Professional Studies	2.53	2.77	3.08	2.92	2.82	2.74	2.71	2.75
<b>Baccalaureate Total</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>3.50</b>	<b>3.42</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>3.33</b>	<b>3.29</b>

Note: Excludes the time to degree of graduates taking more than 12 years to complete a baccalaureate degree.

SOURCE: CUNYOIRA

#### *Excess Credits of Baccalaureate Graduates*

OIRA’s analysis of the average number of excess credits among baccalaureate graduates between 2009-10 and 2018-19 is displayed in Tables 5 and 6. This analysis considers, on average, how many credits above 120 credits baccalaureate graduates have completed. (The analysis takes account of degree programs that require more than 120 credits to graduate.) Data about excess credits should be interpreted with caution, as local college practices related to transfer credit acceptance may have changed due to Pathways policy that all credits must be accepted for transfer. It is not clear if all colleges have used the same policies for transfer credit acceptance both prior to or after implementation of Pathways. These local college policies related to transfer credit acceptance have a direct impact on data about “excess credits” at the time of graduation. Colleges that accept all transfer credits will likely display, on average, baccalaureate graduates with a higher number of excess credits compared to colleges that reject some transfer credits.

Table 5 indicates that over this time period the average number of excess credits at the time of graduation remained flat at approximately 10 excess credits. The average number of excess credits among baccalaureate graduates varies by college. Some colleges, such as Queens and NYCCT, have had an increase in the number of excess credits among graduates. Such increases may be due to adoption of Pathways policy that all transfer credits be accepted. In contrast, other colleges may not have properly adopted the policy to accept all transfer credits, or may have had a policy of accepting all transfer credits prior to Pathways implementation.

Table 6 shows that students who transferred to the baccalaureate program with an AAS degree or from a CUNY associate program without a degree had on average more excess credits at the time of graduation compared to first-time freshmen and students who transferred with the AA/AS degree. For example, in the 2018-19 graduating year, baccalaureate graduates who had transferred with the AAS

degree and those who transferred from a CUNY associate program with no degree graduated with an average of 12 excess credits, compared to 8.4 excess credits among graduates who transferred with the AA/AS degree and 8.6 excess credits among those who began as first-time freshmen.

**TABLE 5. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF EXCESS CREDITS OF BACCALAUREATE GRADUATES**

College	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Baruch	9.5	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.8	9.7	10.0	10.5	9.2	8.9
Brooklyn	11.2	12.5	13.0	13.4	14.0	13.2	12.4	11.6	11.3	10.2
City	11.1	11.5	11.3	11.8	11.0	10.4	10.9	10.9	12.6	11.0
Hunter	10.2	10.6	9.9	9.9	9.8	10.1	10.0	9.8	10.2	9.4
John Jay	4.7	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.2	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.9
Lehman	10.1	9.7	9.5	10.4	10.4	10.4	9.2	8.9	8.7	8.6
Medgar Evers	14.2	14.0	13.7	15.2	15.3	15.1	16.6	17.0	16.6	13.8
NYCCT	10.5	10.2	10.6	10.7	11.6	12.7	13.3	15.9	15.5	15.6
Queens	10.2	35.5	10.5	10.8	11.0	11.1	12.1	12.3	14.2	14.1
Staten Island	13.1	12.8	14.6	13.6	14.0	14.4	14.3	14.1	13.7	12.8
York	8.5	9.2	8.8	8.4	9.4	9.2	10.2	9.9	10.0	7.9
Graduate Center	6.4	6.9	6.9	7.9	6.2	6.7	6.4	5.6	5.8	4.7
Professional Studies	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.7	1.0	0.6
Labor & Urban Studies	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.0
<b>Baccalaureate Total</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>10.0</b>

Note: Excludes graduation from BA/MA programs.

SOURCE: CUNY OIRA

**TABLE 6. TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF EXCESS CREDITS OF BACCALAUREATE GRADUATES BY ENTRY TYPE**

Graduation Year	With AAS Degree	With AA/AS Degree	CUNY Associate No Degree	First-time Freshmen	Total
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
2009-2010	12.5	8.5	11.9	7.8	9.9
2010-2011	11.9	8.2	14.6	8.3	11.0
2011-2012	13.0	8.2	12.1	8.4	10.0
2012-2013	11.7	8.3	12.4	8.5	10.1
2013-2014	12.5	7.9	12.5	8.7	10.3
2014-2015	11.5	7.8	12.3	8.9	10.2
2015-2016	12.4	7.9	12.3	9.0	10.3
2016-2017	13.8	8.4	12.2	9.0	10.4
2017-2018	12.6	8.7	12.3	9.2	10.4
2018-2019	12.0	8.4	12.0	8.6	10.0

Note: Excludes graduation from BA/MA programs.

SOURCE: CUNY OIRA

### *Credit Transfer Toward Degree Requirements*

Pathways offers assurance to students that courses completed for general education requirements will transfer and apply toward general education requirements at any other CUNY campus. Pathways also guarantees that specifically designated courses taken to fulfill entry-level major requirements will transfer toward major requirements at other colleges offering the major. Finally, Pathways requires that all credits earned at a CUNY college must be accepted for credit at any other CUNY college, to the extent

consistent with grade and residency requirements. To evaluate the effectiveness of these policies, OIRA analyzed data from DegreeWorks to determine how transfer courses are applied toward baccalaureate degree requirements for CUNY transfer students.

Table 7 shows the number of CUNY transfer students, as well as the number of transfer courses applied toward degree requirements, between Fall 2012 and Fall 2019. The number of transfer students increased from 13,610 students in Fall 2012 to 15,708 in Fall 2019, an increase of 15.4 percent. Yet for these transfer students, the number of courses applied toward degree requirements increased over this time period by 47 percent. Looking at this data another way, each transfer student in Fall 2012 had, on average, 5.5 courses applied to degree requirements at the receiving college, while each transfer student in Fall 2019 had 7.0 courses applied to degree requirements. This data suggests that CUNY students who transfer, on average, now have a larger amount of transfer coursework applied toward degree requirements at the receiving college.

Table 7 also shows that a larger share of transfer coursework now applies toward general education requirements. To analyze these trends, we must look at both the “general education” and “College Option” categories in the table, as College Option is a component of general education requirements under the Pathways curricular framework. There was an increase in the percent of transfer courses that applied toward general education between Fall 2012 and Fall 2013, from approximately 9 percent to 28 percent. Fall 2013 was the first year that the Pathways curriculum and course transfer guarantees were implemented. Beginning in Fall 2013 there was a process for accepting courses toward the Pathways Common Core areas based on whether the courses were approved as Pathways courses at the sending college. Since Fall 2013, there have been additional increases in the percentage of transfer courses accepted toward general education requirements at the receiving college. In Fall 2019, approximately 44 percent of courses accepted toward degree requirements for transfer students were applied toward general education requirements. This additional increase may be related to the fact that colleges have approved additional courses for the Common Core over time, and also because students are now transferring after having taken the matched curricular requirements at the sending college.

The analysis also shows that the proportion of transfer coursework accepted toward major requirements has remained fairly stable over time, increasing slightly from 25.2 percent of transfer courses applied toward major requirements in Fall 2012 to 28.9 percent applied toward the major in Fall 2019.

Across all curricular categories, in Fall 2012 approximately 35.4 percent of transfer courses applied toward general education, major, or minor requirements, while in Fall 2019 this had increased to 74.2 percent. Although this analysis is not conclusive, this large increase may be attributable to the implementation of the Pathways general education framework for all undergraduate students and Pathways policies related to transfer credit acceptance.

**TABLE 7. TRENDS IN TRANSFER COURSES APPLIED TOWARDS BACCALAUREATE DEGREE FROM CUNY TRANSFERS, BY DEGREEWORKS CATEGORY**

Fall Term	Transfers	Courses Applied	Applied Towards:							
			General Education		College Option		Major		Minor	
	N	N	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fall 2012*	13,610	75,411	6,222	8.3	611	0.8	19,015	25.2	874	1.2
Fall 2013	13,949	79,894	19,440	24.3	3,241	4.1	22,184	27.8	987	1.2
Fall 2014	15,365	95,373	25,363	26.6	3,764	3.9	26,000	27.3	1,297	1.4
Fall 2015	16,048	94,377	30,911	32.8	4,353	4.6	25,808	27.3	1,415	1.5
Fall 2016	16,038	103,702	37,745	36.4	4,005	3.9	27,631	26.6	1,364	1.3
Fall 2017	16,171	109,552	41,603	38.0	4,743	4.3	31,350	28.6	1,596	1.5
Fall 2018	15,813	115,539	47,918	41.5	5,861	5.1	33,051	28.6	1,613	1.4
Fall 2019	15,708	110,764	42,729	38.6	6,323	5.7	32,003	28.9	1,080	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>119,697</b>	<b>784,612</b>	<b>251,931</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>32,901</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>217,042</b>	<b>27.7</b>	<b>10,226</b>	<b>1.3</b>

\*The fall 2012 cohort includes students receiving credit for college option - this credit reflects students who opted into pathways.

SOURCE: CUNY OIRA, DegreeWorks data queried on April 16, 2020.

### *College Option Requirements*

The Office of Undergraduate Studies completed an in-depth evaluation of College Option general education requirements and course transfer guarantees at CUNY’s eight senior colleges. The analysis focuses on two themes: the number of credits applied toward College Option requirements and the transferability of College Option courses toward degree requirements within the CUNY system.

According to Board policy, all baccalaureate students are required to complete 12 credits of College Option, while associate-to-baccalaureate transfer students may be required to complete between 6 to 12 credits depending on the total number of credits completed prior to transfer and whether they had completed the associate degree prior to transfer. Accordingly, the analysis focuses on four types of students: (1) Native Baccalaureate Students, (2) Baccalaureate-to-Baccalaureate Transfer Students, (3) Associate-to-Baccalaureate Transfer Students Without the Associate Degree and (4) Associate-to-Baccalaureate Transfer Students with the Associate Degree.

Findings indicate the number of credits applied toward students’ College Option requirements at senior colleges is consistent with Board policy stipulations, with small observed deviations within reason. For instance, most colleges have students in the Native, Baccalaureate Transfers, and Associate-to-Baccalaureate Transfers Without Degree groups with more than 12 credits applied toward their College Option. However, these ranges appear reasonable, as presented in Table 8. Students may choose to take STEM-variant science courses or other courses with 4 or more credits to fulfill the College Option requirement. In other cases, degree programs have received waivers to specify particular College Option courses that must be completed due to licensure or accreditation requirements, necessitating that transfer students complete additional College Option coursework.

According to the Pathways Guidelines,<sup>14</sup>

*Colleges can offer students the choice of taking College Option courses that total more than the total number of College Option credits required of that student, and students can make the choice to take those courses if they wish. However, it must always be possible for every student to complete the College Option within the number of credits required for their transfer category (6, 9, or 12 credits).*

**TABLE 8. RANGE OF CREDITS APPLIED TOWARD COLLEGE OPTION REQUIREMENT FOR CUNY STUDENTS**

College	Native Students	Baccalaureate Transfers	Associate to Baccalaureate Transfers Without Degree	Associate to Baccalaureate Transfers with Degree
Baruch	3-16	3-15	3-14	6-7
Brooklyn City	6-16	9-16	6-16	6-8
Hunter	3-13	3-13	0-14	0-14
John Jay	3-13.5	3-12	3-12	3-6
Lehman	0-13	9-14	0-12	0-7
Queens	6-13	6-12	6-14	6-6
York	0-17	0-17	6-17	0-7
	9-13	9-12	6-12	6-8

Source: CUNY Office of Undergraduate Studies, DegreeWorks Database queried on March 20, 2019

Native Students represent the largest population of recently enrolled students pursuing baccalaureate degrees at senior colleges. These students began at the baccalaureate college as full-time first-time freshmen and have not transferred. Brooklyn and Queens Colleges have the highest number of Native Baccalaureate students completing more than 12 credits toward College Option requirements, 30.2 and 74.3 percent respectively. While the range of College Option credits at Brooklyn and Queens colleges is 6-16 and 0-17 credits respectively (see Table 8), the majority of students at these institutions who complete over 12 College Option credits have somewhere between 13 and 14 credits applied toward their College Option blocks.

While both Brooklyn and Queens Colleges include 4-credit courses among course options for fulfilling College Option requirements, it appears that based on the overall curricular structure at Queens College most students at the college will not be able to complete College Option requirements within the 12-credit limit. For instance, Queens College requires one language and one science course as part of the College Option requirement. Most of the elementary level language courses (e.g. SPAN 111, ITAL 111, etc.) are 4-credit courses, suggesting that if students are interested in exploring foreign language beginning at the elementary level, they will be required to complete at least 13 credits of College Option. One of the most commonly taken courses, Introduction to Psychology, is a 4-credit course at Queens College. Unlike Brooklyn College where student choice may largely account for the 30 percent of students who complete the College Option requirement with more than 12 credits, at Queens College

<sup>14</sup> The City University of New York. (2018, March 15). *Pathways guidelines*. [https://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/about/policies/Guidelines\\_5\\_24\\_13\\_Final\\_Updated\\_3.15.18\\_accessible.pdf](https://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/about/policies/Guidelines_5_24_13_Final_Updated_3.15.18_accessible.pdf).

the explanation may be more systemic, hence the 74.3 percent of students completing more than 12 credits of College Option.

At City College, almost one-quarter of all Native Baccalaureate students completed fewer than 12 College Option credits due to the opportunity to complete foreign language and communications requirements through departmental examination or pre-college credit such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

Among Baccalaureate-to-Baccalaureate Transfer Students, a majority (72.6 percent) completed between 9 and 12 credits of College Option, while about 14 percent completed more than 12 credits. Similar to the Native Baccalaureate students, of the transfer students who complete over 12 credits of College Option, a vast majority completed between 13 and 14 credits, consistent with the pattern of taking STEM-variant and foreign language courses. For instance, of the 14 students who completed over 12 credits of College Option at City College, all of these students completed 13 credits. Moreover, all of these students were required to complete the College Option requirement for engineering programs, which requires Calculus II. Beginning with the Spring 2019 semester, Calculus II (Math 20200) was changed to a 4-credit course, suggesting that the number of engineering students completing 13 credits of College Option may increase in the future.

The range of credits completed may also be explained by the scribing rules of College Option in DegreeWorks. While Baccalaureate-to-Baccalaureate transfer students are required to complete 12 credits of College Option, some colleges scribe College Option requirements to reflect the application of transfer credits. For instance, at Hunter College, if a student transfer with College Option credits, their degree audit will reflect a reduced College Option requirement. Thus, a student who transferred with 3 credits of College Option would be assigned a 9 credit College Option requirement, which in turn will result in 9 credits being applied toward their College Option requirement in the receiving college DegreeWorks audit. Although the student has completed all 12 credits of College Option as stipulated by the policy, such cases will be presented in this report as completion of 9 College Option Credits.

The analysis also examined Associate-to-Baccalaureate Transfers Without the Associate Degree. Students who first enroll in an associate program and transfer with more than 30 credits but no degree are required to complete 9 College Option credits, while those who do so with 30 or fewer credits are required to complete 12 College Option credits. Approximately 90.8 percent of associate transfers without the degree completed 9 or more credits of College Option, suggesting proper implementation of the Pathways policy.

Associate-to-Baccalaureate Transfers with the Associate Degree represent the second largest population of students required to complete College Option as part of their degree. Pathways policy stipulates that students who transfer to CUNY senior colleges with an associate degree are required to complete 6 credits of College Option. The vast majority of students in our sample (94.4 percent) completed between 6 and 8 credits of College Option, indicating compliance with the policy. Moreover, of those students who complete more than 6 credits, the majority completed 7 credits, consistent with already established trends of course taking. At City College, out of 146 students who completed more than 6 credits, 94 (64.4 percent) were pursuing BE, BSED, and BS degrees that include majors that have received a waiver to specify particular courses that must be completed for College Option regardless of transfer status or prior course taking.

Furthermore, findings of the College Option analysis indicate the transfer guarantees of the College Option are functioning for students. As presented in Table 9, the vast majority of courses that satisfied College Option requirements at the sending college, satisfied College Option or other degree requirements at the receiving college. For instance, 89.3 of all courses that applied toward the College Option blocks in students’ degree audits at the sending college applied to degree requirements at the receiving college. College-based scribing differences, as well as changes in degree and major can explain why College Option transfer courses may apply to a block other than College Option.

The direct application of the College Option courses to the College Option block at the receiving college varies widely. However, such variability can be deceptive. For example, Hunter and Queens have different scribing rules for transfer courses. Instead of directly placing a transferred College Option course in the College Option block, Hunter displays a reduced College Option requirement. Thus, transferred courses almost never appear in the College Option block while students still get credit toward their College Option requirement in the form of requirement reduction. In fact, 96.7 percent of transferred College Option courses at Hunter applied toward the degree more broadly, fulfilling major, general education, and elective requirements, where appropriate.

**TABLE 9. TRANSFER OF COLLEGE OPTION COURSES TO THE RECEIVING COLLEGE**

Receiving College	Number of CO courses completed at the sending college	Percent of CO courses that applied to the CO block	Percent of CO courses that applied to the Degree, NOT including CO block	Percent of CO courses that applied to the Degree, including CO block	Percent of CO Courses that fell into ‘Electives not Allowed’ block
Baruch	855	69.1	23.0	92.2	7.8
Brooklyn City	272	75.7	22.8	98.5	1.5
Hunter	366	0.0	96.7	96.7	3.3
John Jay	125	48.8	48.8	97.6	2.4
Lehman	162	79.6	19.1	98.8	1.2
Queens	515	0.2	71.7	71.8	28.2
York	76	21.1	72.4	93.4	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,601</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>49.2</b>	<b>89.3</b>	<b>10.7</b>

Source: CUNY Office of Undergraduate Studies, Degree Works Database and CUNYfirst Database queried on March 20, 2019

Note: This analysis focused only on courses that were completed in residence at the sending college and received passing grades (A-D; CR; P).

Two colleges in this analysis had a relatively high proportion of transferred College Option courses moved to the “Electives not Allowed” block upon transfer, including City College with 17.8 percent of all transferred College Option courses applying in this category and Queens with 28.2 percent. This block contains courses that do not fulfill any designated degree requirement and therefore do not apply to

students’ degree requirements. There are at least three potential reasons that can explain why transfer courses are allocated to this block that may not signal a systematic transfer problem.

- **Time of data extraction relative to course evaluation.** The DegreeWorks data is live and sensitive to immediate action taken by the registrar or individual advisors. It is important to interpret DegreeWorks output relative to the status of course evaluation. If some courses require departmental review or approval before applying to certain requirements, they may temporarily reside in the “Electives not Allowed” category. Once evaluation is complete, the courses would then be placed into the appropriate degree requirement categories.
- **Individual student’s degree trajectory.** Some students change their degrees and majors upon transfer. Some majors and degrees (for example City College’s engineering programs) have specific College Option requirements that must be completed regardless of transfer status or prior course taking.
- **Scribing rules.** There might be scribing rules that affect course placement in DegreeWorks. For instance, at Queens College, some transfer students’ audits indicate that their College Option block is 100 percent complete but no courses are shown to apply to the block. Instead, some of those courses are designated as “Electives not Allowed.”

As presented in Table 10, the likelihood of bachelor’s students earning College Option credit prior to transfer to another bachelor’s college varies by sending college. Overall, 61.5 percent of students in our sample had at least one course applied toward their College Option requirement according to their most recent sending college degree audit. However, only 5.3 percent had completed the College Option requirement in full prior to transfer.

**TABLE 10. PRE-TRANSFER COLLEGE OPTION COURSE TAKING OF BACCALAUREATE-TO-BACCALAUREATE TRANSFER STUDENTS, BY SENDING COLLEGE**

Sending College	# Students who Transferred to Another Senior College	% with at least one course applied toward CO block at sending college	% with CO block marked complete at sending college
Baruch	145	52.4	2.8
Brooklyn	248	40.7	2.0
City	503	66.0	2.0
Hunter	501	26.9	1.0
John Jay	339	93.8	3.2
Lehman	140	36.4	0.0
Queens	324	92.3	18.8
York	431	71.2	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,631</b>	<b>61.5</b>	<b>5.3</b>

Source: CUNY Office of Undergraduate Studies, DegreeWorks Database queried on March 20, 2019

Note: This analysis focused only on courses that received passing grades (A-D; CR; P). This analysis also includes courses/requirements completed through AP credit, departmental exams, and ePermits.

### *Gateway Courses into Majors*

Pathways offers course transfer guarantees for students enrolled in popular majors. Students who take designated Gateway Courses into Majors are assured those courses will transfer and count toward

major requirements at other CUNY colleges. More than 600 unique courses have been identified across the CUNY colleges as Pathways Gateway Courses into Majors.

Participating Gateway Majors currently include:

- Biology
- Business
- Criminal Justice
- Economics
- English
- Nursing
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Teacher Education

Data suggests that the Pathways transfer guarantees for Gateway Majors are working properly, although possible issues with some of the Gateway Majors require further analysis. Tables 11 and 12 display results of an analysis of students who were enrolled in a Gateway Major at a sending college and then transferred and declared the same major at a receiving college.

Column definitions for Tables 11 and 12 are as follows:

- Gateway Course is the course transferring as equivalent to a Gateway Course at the receiving college.
- Other Course is the course transferring as equivalent to a course not identified as a Gateway Course at the receiving college, for example, ENG 111 (Introduction to College Writing).
- Pathways is the course transferring as equivalent to a Pathways requirement but not as a defined subject course (example: English 102 from LaGuardia transferred to City as RCEC10000, meaning that a student received credit toward the Pathways Required Core, English Composition area, but there is no course equivalency posted on the transcript).
- Subject Elective is the course transferring for elective credit within a particular discipline, for example, BIOL 1000E (Biology Elective).
- Blanket Elective is the course transferring for blanket elective credit, for example, ELEC 1000 (Elective Credit).

Table 11 shows that approximately 82 percent of all Gateway Courses into Majors transferred as equivalent to another Gateway Major course at the receiving college, while an additional 14 percent transferred as equivalent to a non-Gateway Major course at the receiving college. Less than 1 percent of these courses transferred for blanket elective credit. There was variability across colleges, which may reflect individual campus scribing differences. However, across most campuses the percent of Gateway Courses into Majors receiving blanket elective credit was quite low.

Table 12 shows there is variability in how Gateway Courses into Majors transfer depending on the field of study. The sociology Gateway Courses into Majors frequently transfer as equivalent to non-Gateway courses because the Gateway Major requirements for sociology are organized based on broad

categories rather than using a course equivalency model. Course transferability in the teacher education and nursing Gateway Majors should be analyzed further.

**TABLE 11. TRANSFER STATUS OF INCOMING GATEWAY COURSES AT RECEIVING COLLEGES, 2018-2019**

Receiving Colleges	Total Number of Gateway Major Courses <sup>1</sup>	Transfer Status of Incoming Gateway Courses at Receiving Colleges				
		Gateway Course	Other Course	Pathways	Subject Elective	Blanket Elective
Baruch	3,467	95.8	1.6	0.1	2.6	0.0
Brooklyn	1,354	70.3	27.7	0.7	0.9	0.4
City	841	62.8	28.2	3.4	5.6	0.0
Hunter	1,846	93.1	4.1	2.0	0.0	0.9
John Jay	870	91.8	3.2	0.0	4.8	0.1
Lehman	1,564	59.0	37.0	0.0	4.0	0.1
Queens	1,436	74.7	17.2	0.0	6.1	2.1
York	494	90.3	6.9	0.0	2.8	0.0
<b>Senior Total</b>	<b>11,872</b>	<b>82.2</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>0.4</b>
Staten Island	143	65.0	31.5	0.0	2.8	0.7
Medgar Evers	260	76.2	19.2	0.0	4.6	0.0
NYCCT	200	84.0	8.0	0.0	1.0	7.0
<b>Comprehensive Total</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>76.1</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.5</b>
Bronx	104	90.4	2.9	0.0	3.8	2.9
BMCC	69	79.7	10.1	0.0	1.4	8.7
Hostos	113	76.1	11.5	0.0	12.4	0.0
Kingsborough	219	73.5	5.0	12.3	7.8	1.4
LaGuardia	151	93.4	6.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Queensborough	76	81.6	11.8	0.0	5.3	1.3
<b>Community Total</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>81.8</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>University Total</b>	<b>13,207</b>	<b>81.9</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>0.6</b>

<sup>1</sup> Gateway Courses into Majors taken at a sending institution and transferred into a receiving institution in 2018-2019.

SOURCE: CUNY Office of Undergraduate Studies, IRDB and CUNYFirst

**TABLE 12. TRANSFER STATUS OF INCOMING GATEWAY COURSES AT RECEIVING COLLEGES, BY MAJOR, 2018-2019**

Majors	Total Number of Gateway Major Courses <sup>1</sup>	Transfer Status of Incoming Gateway Courses at Receiving Colleges				
		Gateway Course	Other Course	Pathways	Subject Elective	Blanket Elective
Biology	1,592	84.9	8.0	2.5	4.1	0.6
Business	4,128	90.8	6.2	0.0	2.8	0.1
Criminal Justice	437	90.6	3.9	0.2	3.9	1.4
Economics	350	75.4	18.9	0.9	4.6	0.3
English	486	78.6	10.1	6.2	4.7	0.4
Nursing	1,141	65.0	30.8	0.4	2.6	1.1
Political Science	173	76.9	13.3	1.7	6.9	1.2
Psychology	3,564	84.5	13.4	0.3	1.7	0.1
Sociology	495	65.5	28.1	1.4	4.4	0.6
Teacher Ed	841	55.2	34.2	0.2	5.9	4.4
<b>University Total</b>	<b>13,207</b>	<b>81.9</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>0.6</b>

<sup>1</sup> Gateway Courses into Majors taken at a sending institution and transferred into a receiving institution in 2018-2019. SOURCE: CUNY Office of Undergraduate Studies, IRDB and CUNYFirst

There are other large majors that should also be considered for inclusion as Pathways Gateway Majors. Table 13 displays the number of internal transfer students who enrolled in particular majors over a five-year period, between 2014-15 and 2018-19. Majors with at least 300 internal transfer students over this period are included in the table. For example, majors such as computer science, fine arts, history, and information science are popular among students but are not yet included as Pathways Gateway Majors.

Some accounting and finance degree programs include the Gateway Major courses identified for the business Gateway, while others do not. Such fields of study might be easily adapted for inclusion as Pathways Gateway Majors. Professional programs such as social work and hospital administration might identify course offerings available in the community colleges that will be accepted toward the major even though the community colleges do not offer these majors.

Information for students regarding the Pathways Gateway Majors may be confusing. Degree programs that are included as Pathways Gateway Majors are not clearly identified across the CUNY system. Gateway Courses into Majors are identified using the Class Attribute field within CUNYfirst, but there is not a widely accessible list of degree programs that include the full slate of identified Gateway Courses into Majors for the field of study. Degree programs with similar names are not uniformly included within the Gateway Major. For example, it may be confusing whether programs called “biomedical science” and “biotechnology” are included in the biology Gateway Major, if “forensic psychology” is included in the psychology Gateway Major, or if “law enforcement administration” is included in the criminal justice Gateway Major.

**TABLE 13. TRENDS IN INTERNAL TRANSFERS FROM CUNY ASSOCIATE TO BACCALAUREATE PROGRAMS BY MAJOR**

Baccalaureate Major	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	Total
	N	N	N	N	N	N
General Studies - Undeclared Major	3,130	2,930	2,876	2,480	1,376	13,503
Psychology, General	923	1,009	1,073	1,111	1,268	6,182
Accounting	1,024	1,009	936	885	900	5,293
Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement Administration	662	733	797	851	846	4,462
Business Administration and Management, General	600	561	597	619	630	3,401
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	451	466	461	456	463	2,637
Biology/Biological Sciences, General	259	321	406	408	540	2,277
Sociology	251	290	370	368	450	2,035
Finance, General	311	327	362	355	350	1,898
Information Science/Studies	285	285	275	314	363	1,720
Computer Science	155	232	302	315	394	1,673
Criminal Justice/Police Science	180	216	266	313	381	1,591
English Language and Literature, General	247	257	276	276	266	1,456
Elementary Education and Teaching	154	232	246	254	254	1,303
Social Work	238	237	219	189	220	1,251
Forensic Psychology	177	156	189	207	225	1,070
Sales, Distribution, and Marketing Operations, General	256	159	170	157	168	1,019
Early Childhood Education and Teaching	124	161	178	190	199	997
Economics, General	143	161	184	153	197	948
Hospital and Health Care Facilities Administration/Management	120	175	140	154	171	884
Political Science and Government, General	128	135	167	155	142	831
Fine/Studio Arts, General	112	137	142	160	167	829
Audiology/Audiologist and Speech-Language Pathology/Pathologist	117	118	132	130	153	730
Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies	162	78	147	121	146	710
Kinesiology and Exercise Science	117	115	115	133	106	686
Computer and Information Sciences, General	93	76	96	111	97	527
Criminology	84	106	103	91	78	508
Business/Corporate Communications	91	90	97	100	81	494
Mass Communication/Media Studies	59	82	70	79	101	477
Business/Commerce, General	76	82	84	97	73	457
Human Services, General	49	83	52	100	86	451
Hospitality Administration/Management, General	101	85	83	71	82	450
Computer and Information Systems Security/Information Assurance	32	60	62	71	118	441
History, General	71	58	75	87	105	439
Public Health Education and Promotion	52	57	67	79	96	417
Mathematics, General	71	60	74	66	87	412
Dietetics/Dietitian	65	73	81	73	64	395
Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences, General	38	45	58	67	100	378
Public Administration	66	73	77	67	55	367
Chemistry, General	43	70	52	57	85	364
Legal Studies, General	44	55	62	77	69	349
Drama and Dramatics/Theatre Arts, General	42	49	64	74	65	339
Cinematography and Film/Video Production	55	44	48	61	57	324
International Business/Trade/Commerce	10	39	69	66	79	321
Physical Education Teaching and Coaching	53	44	53	54	51	307
<b>Total Transfers</b>	<b>13,246</b>	<b>13,663</b>	<b>14,304</b>	<b>14,337</b>	<b>14,142</b>	<b>78,695</b>

Note: Majors are defined by CIP code.

SOURCE: CUNY OIRA

### *Local Campus Policies: Overlay and Residency Requirements*

In some cases, local campus policies may conflict with Pathways policies. For example, campuses frequently include requirements in addition to general education and major requirements, such as a requirement that students complete a certain number of courses categorized as “writing intensive.” Pathways policy is that students must be able to complete writing intensive course requirements as “overlays.” That is, writing intensive course requirements must be completed while simultaneously completing requirements for general education or the major. Such requirements should not add to the total credits required for completion of the degree, and students should not use elective credits to complete such requirements.

See Table 14 for a summary of the overlay requirements at each college. Among the community colleges, all except LaGuardia require at least one overlay requirement. BMCC requires one writing intensive course; Bronx, Guttman, Hostos, and Queensborough require two writing intensive courses; and Kingsborough requires one writing intensive course and one civic engagement course or experience. Five senior colleges require no overlay requirements, while overlay requirements at other senior colleges range from one to seven courses required.

Preliminary analysis suggests that at some colleges some students fulfill overlay requirements without meeting other requirements for the major or general education simultaneously. In these cases, the overlay requirements add to the total credits required for graduation. In contrast, other colleges incorporate the overlay requirements seamlessly into the general education or major curriculum. For example, at Guttman Community College all students complete one writing intensive course as part of general education and the second writing intensive course in the major. New York City College of Technology also requires that the writing intensive requirements be completed in general education or the major.

Table 15 displays preliminary data about writing intensive courses and enrollments in Spring 2020 at each CUNY college with such offerings. Across the University, there were 1,266 writing intensive courses and more than 58,000 enrollments in such courses. Approximately one-third of all writing intensive courses and almost half of all writing intensive enrollments were offered as part of the Pathways Common Core. The proportion of writing intensive enrollments that were in Common Core courses varied widely, from 0 percent at Brooklyn to 73 percent at Bronx.

Campus residency requirements represent another local policy that may limit the applicability of transfer coursework. It is common for there to be residency requirements for a minimum number of credits that must be completed at the college, as well as a minimum number of credits that must be completed in the major at the college. There may also be rules about the number of credits that may overlap between dual majors or minors. At the community colleges it is common to have a residency requirement of 30 credits, as well as a limit on the number of transfer credits that will be accepted. In some cases, a limit of 30 transfer credits accepted results in students needing to complete more than 30 credits in residence. This might occur for students enrolled in degree programs that require more than 60 credits, or for students who change majors. These policies may violate Pathways policy, which states that all credits must be accepted for transfer to the extent consistent with grade requirements and residency rules. The campus residency and transfer credit acceptance policies are summarized in Table 16.

Other campus-based policies may also violate Pathways policies. For example, transfer credits from other CUNY colleges are not always accepted for credit. In other cases, curricular requirements such as the College Option requirements are organized such that many CUNY students are required to complete more than the maximum number of credits specified under Pathways. Such local policies are in violation of fundamental Pathways policies and must be addressed at the campus level.

**TABLE 14. CAMPUS OVERLAY REQUIREMENTS**

Senior/Comprehensive Colleges	Overlay Requirement	Courses Required
Baruch	Communication Intensive	varies by program
Brooklyn	Writing Intensive	one or more WI courses required in the major, unless student enrolled in a major classified as WI (art, classics, education, English, music, philosophy and political science)
City	None	
	Writing Intensive	3 courses
Hunter	Pluralism and Diversity	4 courses (one from each of 4 categories)
John Jay	None	
Lehman	Writing Intensive	4 courses
Medgar Evers	None	
		Associate degrees- 2 courses, one in general education and one in the major.
NYCCT	Writing Intensive	Bachelor's degrees- 4 courses, two in general education and two in the major
Queens	Writing Intensive	2 courses
SPS	None	
Staten Island	None	
York	Writing Intensive	3 courses

Community Colleges	Overlay Requirement	Courses Required
BMCC	Writing Intensive	1 course
Bronx	Writing Intensive	2 courses
Guttman	Writing Intensive	2 courses
Hostos	Writing Intensive	2 courses
	Civic Engagement	1 experience (course, component course, or experience)
Kingsborough	Writing Intensive	1 course
LaGuardia	Urban Study	1 course recommended (not required)
Queensborough	Writing Intensive	2 courses

SOURCE: CUNY Office of Undergraduate Studies, March 2020

**TABLE 15. WRITING INTENSIVE COURSES BY PATHWAYS COMMON CORE AREA, PRELIMINARY SPRING 2020**

	Total WI Courses	Total WI Enrollment	Required Core, English Comp		Required Core, Math and Quant Reasoning		Required Core, Life and Physical Sciences		Flexible Core, World Cultures and Global Issues		Flexible Core, US Experience in its Diversity		Flexible Core, Creative Expression		Flexible Core, Individual and Society		Flexible Core, Scientific World		% of WI Enrollment in Common Core
			Courses	Enroll	Courses	Enroll	Courses	Enroll	Courses	Enroll	Courses	Enroll	Courses	Enroll	Courses	Enroll	Courses	Enroll	
BMCC	120	4,603			3	203	4	84	11	428	5	160	6	328	15	895	2	65	47.0%
Bronx	91	4,084			1	14	7	640	9	507	12	732	8	458	8	475	4	156	73.0%
Brooklyn	48	1,873																	0.0%
Guttman	6	631	1	430															68.1%
Hostos	52	1,846					1	22	3	77	4	185	3	85	4	164	4	101	34.3%
Hunter	187	9,528	3	1,980					14	737	4	1,345	8	273	16	782	1	30	54.0%
John Jay	42	1,422							2	62	1	62	2	71	1	84			19.6%
KBCC	95	3,079					4	194	8	252	6	195	12	578	11	358	4	220	58.4%
LaGuardia	43	3,950							5	597	10	1,263	4	230	4	374			62.4%
Lehman	165	7,333					3	420	13	301	6	227	12	725	5	190	2	45	26.0%
Medgar Evers	5	418							1	299									71.5%
NYCCT	133	6,953					2	551	9	363	5	169	10	534	17	537	9	1,132	47.3%
Queens	85	4,302			1	22	1	24	3	330	5	238	3	240	1	24	1	206	25.2%
QBCC	118	5,857			3	525	9	625	13	323	4	122	11	787	9	657	11	495	60.3%
York	76	2,235							6	246	4	119	6	274	1	254			40.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,266</b>	<b>58,114</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2,410</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>764</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>2,560</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>4,522</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>4,817</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>4,583</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>4,794</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>2,450</b>	<b>46.3%</b>

SOURCE: CUNY OIRA, CBIL, March 24, 2020

**TABLE 16. CAMPUS RESIDENCY AND TRANSFER CREDIT ACCEPTANCE POLICIES**

Senior Colleges	Residency and Transfer Credit Acceptance Policies
Baruch	BA/BS/SPA: 30 credits must be completed in residence, and 60% of credits in the major must be taken at Baruch.  BBA: 31 credits must be completed in residence, and 60% of credits in the major must be taken at Baruch.
Brooklyn	30 credits must be completed in residence, the last 18 credits toward the degree must be taken in residence, at least 15 credits in advanced courses in the major department must be taken in residence
City	To be eligible for a degree, a student must complete a minimum of 80 credits at the City College of New York, or they must complete the last 30 credits of their degree at City College. At least 60% of the major must be completed in residence.
Hunter	For students transferring from community colleges, a maximum of 70 credits will be accepted. For students transferring from bachelor's colleges, a maximum of 90 credits will be accepted.  At least some majors specify a maximum number of transfer credits that will be applied to the major.
John Jay	Residency requirement of 30 credits, and at least 50 percent of the credits in the major must be completed in residence.
Lehman	Residency requirement of 30 credits, and at least 50 percent of the credits in the major must be completed in residence.
Medgar Evers	program. Max of 90 credits may be transferred toward a bachelor's program. Residency requirement is at least 30 credits. 18 credits in the major
NYCCT	Associate programs- Residency requirement of 30 credits. At least 17 credits must be taken in residence for the major.  Baccalaureate programs- A minimum of 30 postassociate degree credits must be completed in residence, at least 17 of which must be from among those listed as "Required Courses in the Major."
Queens	At least 45 credits must be taken in residence, and at least 30 of the last 64 credits must be taken in residence or at the Grad Center. At least 1/3 of the credits must be taken in the concentration.
SPS	At least 30 credits must be completed at SPS.
Staten Island	30 credits must be completed in residence. At least 50% of the major must be completed in residence.
York	At least 40 credits must be completed in residence. At least 50 percent of the credits in the major must be completed in residence.

Community Colleges	Residency and Transfer Credit Acceptance Policies
BMCC	Maximum of 30 transfer credits accepted.  30 credits must be completed in residence.
Bronx	Nursing program stipulates a max of 30 transfer credits accepted.  30 credits must be completed in residence.
Guttman	45 credits must be completed at Guttman, with no more than 9 transfer credits accepted toward the program of study
Hostos	Maximum of 30 transfer credits accepted.
Kingsborough	Maximum of 30 transfer credits accepted.  30 credits must be completed in residence.
LaGuardia	Maximum of 30 transfer credits accepted.  50% of the degree, or 30 credits, must be
Queensborough	Maximum of 30 transfer credits accepted.  30 credits must be completed in residence.

SOURCE: CUNY Office of Undergraduate Studies, March 2020

### Student Experiences of Pathways

Pathways was designed to improve transparency and efficiency of course transfer within the CUNY system, and thereby improve the overall experience of transfer for students. However, current data is needed to better understand whether this complex initiative is widely understood by CUNY students, and whether CUNY students value the curricular structure and policies related to transfer credit acceptance.

The Year Three Pathways evaluation presented results of student focus groups conducted in Spring 2015 with 57 CUNY students that suggested there was a lack of awareness of Pathways.<sup>15</sup> Based on the results of those focus groups, just 7 percent of the focus group participants were very familiar with the transfer guarantees, while 63 percent knew a little about them and 30 percent reported they didn't know anything about them. Community college students who participated in the focus groups overwhelmingly thought the transfer credit guarantees would be helpful to them and expressed a desire that the credit acceptance policies be expanded to non-CUNY schools.

Over the last several years a number of additional steps have been taken to inform students about Pathways. In 2018, course transfer guarantees were extended to students transferring from SUNY colleges with general education credit.<sup>16</sup> However, concerns about barriers students experience related to transfer persist. Surveys with students entering CUNY associate programs in Fall 2011 show that approximately 75 percent aspired to earn a bachelor's degree or higher; however just 19 percent eventually transferred to a bachelor's program.<sup>17</sup>

The Year Six Task Force has reviewed data to determine which aspects of Pathways should be strengthened to improve the experiences of CUNY students related to transfer. Data collected through CUNY's Transfer Opportunity Project (TOP)<sup>18</sup> is presented here. TOP is the result of a grant from the federal Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to study leaks in the associate-to-bachelor's-degree transfer pipeline and factors associated with those leaks. The project is overseen by Dr. Alexandra Logue, Principal Investigator, Research Professor at the Center for Advanced Study in Education (CASE) at CUNY's Graduate Center; and co-Principal Investigators Dr. Barbara Condliffe, Research Associate at MDRC; Dr. Colin Chellman, CUNY University Dean for Institutional and Policy Research; and Dr. Rekha Balu, Senior Fellow with MDRC. Data from the TOP student survey is expected in the coming months, and should be examined to further inform University goals related to Pathways.

Data is presented from the TOP staff survey and TOP focus groups with students and staff. Data is also presented in this section related to how CUNY students experience the Pathways curriculum, including course taking across disciplines and communication of the Pathways student learning outcomes.

### *Results from the TOP Staff Survey*

In 2019, the TOP project completed a survey of CUNY staff to gather data about student transfer.<sup>19</sup> Campus liaisons at all 19 undergraduate CUNY colleges were asked for a list of staff who deal with transfer students as a significant part of their jobs. Staff who work at the community colleges with

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<sup>15</sup> The City University of New York. Office of Academic Affairs. (2017, September). *Pathways general education initiative year-three review*. <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/Pathways-Third-YearReview-and-Memo-FINAL-REVISED-2017.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> The City University of New York. Office of Academic Affairs. (2018, June 25). *Guidelines for granting transfer credit for SUNY general education courses toward CUNY general education requirements*. [https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/registrar/resources/SUNY-CUNY-Transfer-Evaluation-memo\\_6-25-18.pdf](https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/registrar/resources/SUNY-CUNY-Transfer-Evaluation-memo_6-25-18.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> The City University of New York. Office of Policy Research. (2019, January 14). *What we know about transfer students at CUNY*. Bronx Transfer Alliance Group Meeting. <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/oira/policy/a2b/research/>

<sup>18</sup> The City University of New York. A2B (Associate's to Bachelor's Degree Transfers). (n.d.). *Transfer Opportunity Project*. <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/oira/policy/a2b/top/>

<sup>19</sup> Logue, A.W. & Gentsch, K. (2020, February 6). *Survey of staff at 19 colleges: Services that help and hinder transfer student success*. Presentation at NISTS 2020 Annual Conference. <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/oira/policy/a2b/research/NISTSStaffSurveyLogue.020320.pdf>

students considering, planning, or pursuing transfer to a bachelor's degree were recruited for the survey. At the senior colleges, staff who work with incoming transfer students from community colleges were also asked to participate. Staff could work on any transfer-related service and be from any office or academic department to participate in the survey. The survey was sent electronically to 1,111 staff at 19 colleges, with a range of 9 to 129 staff members who received the survey per college. The survey was available for three weeks. In total, 622 staff members participated in the survey, a response rate of 56 percent, with a range of 22 to 100 percent response rate per college.

As reported by Logue & Gentsch (2020),<sup>20</sup> results from the staff survey suggest that at both associate and bachelor's colleges, faculty, compared to staff, are less confident in their understanding of University policies related to transfer and in their use of transfer software. Faculty at both types of institutions were also more likely than staff to report that they never or rarely communicated with other offices at the college about transfer. Staff and faculty at the associate colleges were more likely to attribute problems with student transfer to policies and practices in place at the receiving bachelor's colleges, while staff and faculty at the bachelor's colleges were more likely to attribute problems to the students or to the associate programs. Faculty at the associate colleges were especially likely to be concerned that students encounter difficulty with the transfer of credits, although the topic of credit transfer is not uniformly covered in academic advisement sessions at associate colleges.

#### *Results from TOP Student and Staff Focus Groups*

In collaboration with CUNY, MDRC's Center for Applied Behavioral Sciences (CABS) worked with six partner CUNY colleges in 2019 to collect detailed data about every aspect of the student enrollment and transfer process through interviews and focus groups with students and staff.<sup>21</sup> The goal of the data collection was to identify barriers that students who begin in community colleges with the goal of attaining a bachelor's degree may encounter along their educational journey, and surface promising practices colleges are already using to improve the transfer student experience. Detailed analysis was conducted about each phase of the educational journey, including:

- Enrolling at the community college with the intention of earning a bachelor's degree;
- Initiating the transfer process;
- Completing the transfer application;
- Admitting to the bachelor's degree program;
- Enrolling in the bachelor's degree program;
- Completing the bachelor's degree.

MDRC makes two central recommendations to reduce the barriers students experience related to transfer.<sup>22</sup> First, mechanisms for student advisement must more strategically and consistently

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<sup>20</sup> Logue, A.W. & Gentsch, K. (2020, February 6). *Survey of staff at 19 colleges: Services that help and hinder transfer student success*. Presentation at NISTS 2020 Annual Conference. <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/oira/policy/a2b/research/NISTStaffSurveyLogue.020320.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Condliffe, B. & Sutcliffe, S. (forthcoming). *Barriers and opportunities to improve transfer student experiences (working paper)*. MDRC.

<sup>22</sup> These recommendations generally align with prior studies that issue recommendations regarding student transfer at CUNY, including: Eller, C.C. (2017). *Increasing success for two-to-four-year transfer students within The City University of New York*. GraduateNYC. <http://bit.ly/2mGe6r5>; Wyner, J., Deane, K.C., Jenkins, D., Fink, J. (2016). *The transfer playbook: Essential practices for two-and four-year colleges*. The Aspen Institute and Community College Research Center. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED565894.pdf>

incorporate support for students who plan to transfer. In order to accomplish this objective, specific practices observed or recommended include:

- Create metrics that can be tracked and evaluated related to student transfer success;
- Address information gaps by supporting cross-campus affinity groups, implementing the DegreeWorks “What-If” function, or having a central office at CUNY responsible for disseminating information about student transfer;
- Reduce uncertainty by making the back-end admissions and credit transfer process transparent to students and staff;
- Create differentiated advisement support for students dependent on the degree programs in which they aspire to transfer;
- Improve student outreach related to transfer processes and timelines and offer personalized outreach based on student characteristics.

The second key recommendation is to better bridge the gap between institutions for students who transfer. Specific practices observed or recommended to achieve this goal include:

- Streamline the transfer enrollment process for students. For example, by implementing automated transfer credit evaluation, eliminating steps such as the commitment deposit requirement, or implementing automated processes to notify students if they register for a course that is not needed for graduation;
- Increase resources for services to support students post-transfer, such as greater outreach about available services and establishment of peer mentoring programs;
- Improve collaboration on issues pertinent to student transfer across colleges, and across departments within the same college;
- Provide clear information to students about the enrollment process and offer personalized introductions to the college before offers are sent;
- Improve outreach to admitted students about the enrollment and registration process.

### *Student Course Taking*

Since the inception of Pathways there have been questions about how the new curricular structure impacts student course taking across disciplines. While the Required Core areas mandate course taking in English Composition, Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning, and Life and Physical Sciences, the Flexible Core areas are thematic and defined broadly by student learning outcomes. Many different disciplines may be included in the areas of the Flexible Core. The baccalaureate colleges have discretion to choose courses from any disciplines for the additional College Option general education requirements. It was recognized that adoption of the new curricular structure could result in changing patterns of student course taking across disciplines. However, shifts in course taking across disciplines may be due to trends that are unrelated to Pathways.

In Tables 17 and 18, first-time freshmen and overall undergraduate course taking by discipline is presented. Between 2012-13 and 2018-19, there were declines in course taking among both first-time freshmen and all undergraduate students in the arts, education, history, and nursing. There was also a decline in undergraduate course taking in the humanities, although this decline did not occur among first-time freshmen during their first year. While the proportion of first-time freshmen taking courses in speech/communication during their first year declined, the proportion of all undergraduates taking these courses in a given year remained steady.

Course taking in ethnic studies, computer science, natural sciences, and social sciences increased among both first-time freshmen and undergraduates overall. In fact, between 2012-13 and 2018-19 course taking in the natural sciences among first-time freshmen increased from 27.7 percent to 41.2 percent. Course taking among first-time freshmen in math also increased during this time period, from 79.6 percent to 85.3 percent. The proportion of students taking foreign language courses has remained steady. In 2018-19, 18 percent of first-time freshmen and 19 percent of all undergraduates took a foreign language course.

**TABLE 17. TRENDS IN FIRST-TIME FRESHMAN COURSE TAKING BY DISCIPLINE**

Discipline	Took Course during the Academic Year*													
	Fall 2012/ Spring 2013		Fall 2013/ Spring 2014		Fall 2014/ Spring 2015		Fall 2015/ Spring 2016		Fall 2016/ Spring 2017		Fall 2017/ Spring 2018		Fall 2018/ Spring 2019	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Architecture	188	0.5	203	0.6	176	0.5	207	0.6	211	0.6	243	0.6	234	0.6
Arts	15,802	44.4	15,186	42.6	14,905	39.9	13,411	35.8	13,741	37.2	14,984	39.3	15,796	39.8
Business	5,685	16.0	5,466	15.3	5,860	15.7	5,563	14.9	5,496	14.9	5,564	14.6	6,046	15.2
Accounting	1,842	5.2	1,838	5.2	2,049	5.5	1,998	5.3	2,028	5.5	2,032	5.3	2,298	5.8
Computer Science	3,337	9.4	3,254	9.1	3,606	9.6	3,639	9.7	4,027	10.9	4,310	11.3	4,838	12.2
Criminal Justice	1,949	5.5	2,307	6.5	2,592	6.9	2,384	6.4	2,525	6.8	2,786	7.3	2,896	7.3
Education	3,791	10.6	2,595	7.3	2,510	6.7	2,552	6.8	2,438	6.6	2,446	6.4	2,275	5.7
Engineering/Technology	1,595	4.5	1,648	4.6	1,731	4.6	1,718	4.6	1,687	4.6	1,735	4.5	1,722	4.3
Ethnic Studies	2,953	8.3	2,572	7.2	2,711	7.3	2,576	6.9	2,852	7.7	3,411	8.9	3,770	9.5
Foreign Languages	6,454	18.1	6,965	19.6	7,736	20.7	7,367	19.7	7,380	20.0	7,864	20.6	7,144	18.0
History	8,461	23.8	8,816	24.7	8,999	24.1	9,035	24.1	8,503	23.0	8,457	22.2	8,353	21.1
Humanities	32,553	91.4	32,838	92.2	34,501	92.3	34,252	91.5	34,192	92.7	35,436	92.9	37,095	93.5
English/Literature	31,882	89.5	32,304	90.7	34,044	91.1	33,769	90.2	33,714	91.4	34,797	91.2	36,438	91.9
Philosophy	6,498	18.2	6,863	19.3	6,752	18.1	6,603	17.6	5,697	15.4	5,994	15.7	6,602	16.6
Math	28,363	79.6	29,745	83.5	31,518	84.3	32,402	86.6	32,199	87.3	32,697	85.7	33,846	85.3
Natural Sciences	9,863	27.7	12,108	34.0	12,729	34.1	13,157	35.1	13,417	36.4	15,040	39.4	16,325	41.2
Nursing/Health	5,984	16.8	4,343	12.2	4,615	12.3	4,399	11.8	3,727	10.1	4,048	10.6	4,116	10.4
Social Sciences	27,794	78.0	27,907	78.3	29,403	78.7	29,643	79.2	29,033	78.7	30,943	81.1	32,544	82.1
Anthropology	3,304	9.3	3,573	10.0	4,043	10.8	4,608	12.3	4,642	12.6	5,827	15.3	6,454	16.3
Economics	3,841	10.8	4,052	11.4	4,456	11.9	4,406	11.8	4,349	11.8	5,011	13.1	5,393	13.6
Political Science	4,630	13.0	4,795	13.5	4,948	13.2	5,151	13.8	5,189	14.1	5,629	14.8	6,119	15.4
Psychology	14,258	40.0	15,154	42.5	15,206	40.7	15,031	40.2	14,294	38.7	14,900	39.0	15,327	38.6
Sociology	9,716	27.3	10,195	28.6	10,572	28.3	10,191	27.2	9,758	26.4	10,224	26.8	11,299	28.5
Speech/Communication	13,460	37.8	11,539	32.4	12,489	33.4	12,873	34.4	12,352	33.5	12,710	33.3	13,316	33.6
<b>Total First-time Freshmen</b>	<b>35,616</b>		<b>35,622</b>		<b>37,375</b>		<b>37,435</b>		<b>36,903</b>		<b>38,162</b>		<b>39,660</b>	

\*Reflects the proportion of first-time freshmen who have taken a course in a given discipline during the first fall and spring semester after entrance.

SOURCE: CUNY OIRA

**TABLE 18. TRENDS IN UNDERGRADUATE COURSE TAKING BY DISCIPLINE**

Discipline	Took Course during the Academic Year*													
	Fall 2012/ Spring 2013		Fall 2013/ Spring 2014		Fall 2014/ Spring 2015		Fall 2015/ Spring 2016		Fall 2016/ Spring 2017		Fall 2017/ Spring 2018		Fall 2018/ Spring 2019	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Architecture	1,189	0.5	1,172	0.5	1,169	0.5	1,178	0.5	1,271	0.5	1,278	0.5	1,363	0.6
Arts	62,980	26.5	63,737	26.6	63,642	25.9	59,759	24.4	59,597	24.5	59,499	24.3	60,045	24.5
Business	46,769	19.7	47,593	19.9	48,446	19.7	47,699	19.4	47,212	19.4	46,766	19.1	46,509	19.0
Accounting	22,656	9.5	23,611	9.9	23,796	9.7	24,646	10.0	24,697	10.1	23,634	9.7	23,283	9.5
Computer Science	24,262	10.2	24,372	10.2	26,446	10.8	27,008	11.0	28,394	11.7	29,624	12.1	30,623	12.5
Criminal Justice	11,937	5.0	13,197	5.5	13,683	5.6	13,492	5.5	13,337	5.5	14,066	5.8	14,334	5.9
Education	24,166	10.2	21,182	8.8	18,998	7.7	18,618	7.6	18,247	7.5	18,217	7.5	17,763	7.3
Engineering/Technology	8,981	3.8	9,535	4.0	10,135	4.1	10,417	4.2	10,632	4.4	10,922	4.5	10,927	4.5
Ethnic Studies	17,638	7.4	16,084	6.7	17,859	7.3	17,754	7.2	18,600	7.6	19,950	8.2	20,580	8.4
Foreign Languages	46,317	19.5	46,272	19.3	48,451	19.7	48,046	19.6	47,612	19.6	48,750	19.9	46,500	19.0
History	42,742	18.0	43,932	18.3	43,769	17.8	42,532	17.3	39,338	16.2	35,479	14.5	33,366	13.6
Humanities	125,029	52.6	124,498	52.0	125,401	51.0	123,732	50.4	121,669	50.0	122,097	50.0	121,658	49.7
English/Literature	105,666	44.4	104,410	43.6	104,843	42.7	102,314	41.7	99,977	41.1	100,036	40.9	98,937	40.4
Philosophy	30,021	12.6	30,572	12.8	29,454	12.0	29,090	11.9	26,462	10.9	26,824	11.0	27,318	11.2
Math	105,235	44.3	107,869	45.0	110,615	45.0	109,687	44.7	107,026	43.9	105,867	43.3	104,662	42.7
Natural Sciences	79,449	33.4	82,812	34.6	88,603	36.1	88,383	36.0	88,069	36.2	89,849	36.8	89,853	36.7
Nursing/Health	35,632	15.0	33,309	13.9	32,100	13.1	31,407	12.8	29,932	12.3	31,097	12.7	32,008	13.1
Social Sciences	150,000	63.1	151,232	63.1	157,126	64.0	157,840	64.4	156,897	64.4	159,039	65.1	159,336	65.0
Anthropology	16,376	6.9	17,438	7.3	19,557	8.0	20,568	8.4	21,271	8.7	25,083	10.3	25,409	10.4
Economics	28,826	12.1	29,319	12.2	30,252	12.3	30,216	12.3	30,328	12.5	30,812	12.6	30,509	12.5
Political Science	24,413	10.3	24,456	10.2	25,391	10.3	25,668	10.5	25,593	10.5	26,162	10.7	25,651	10.5
Psychology	63,072	26.5	65,793	27.5	66,562	27.1	65,489	26.7	63,690	26.2	63,785	26.1	63,199	25.8
Sociology	39,117	16.5	40,948	17.1	40,673	16.6	41,034	16.7	39,561	16.2	39,386	16.1	40,825	16.7
Speech/Communication	39,100	16.4	37,217	15.5	40,594	16.5	40,832	16.6	40,090	16.5	40,852	16.7	39,857	16.3
<b>Total Undergraduates</b>	<b>237,737</b>		<b>239,497</b>		<b>245,646</b>		<b>245,279</b>		<b>243,526</b>		<b>244,420</b>		<b>244,951</b>	

\*Reflects the proportion of undergraduates enrolled in the fall semester who took a course in a given discipline during a fall or spring semester.

SOURCE: CUNY OIRA

*Student Learning Outcomes for Common Core Courses*

The Pathways Common Core<sup>23</sup> has been fully implemented across CUNY’s undergraduate colleges since Fall 2013. Now in the seventh year of the program, well over 2,000 courses have been reviewed and approved by the Common Core Course Review Committee (CCRC) for inclusion in the Pathways Common Core. These courses are required to meet specified student learning outcomes (SLOs), for three Required Common Core areas<sup>24</sup> and five Flexible Common Core areas.<sup>25</sup> As part of the course review process, a sample syllabus must be submitted to the CCRC demonstrating course activities or assignments that ensure students meet the SLOs for the area. Some anecdotal evidence suggested, however, that syllabi for Common Core courses actually used and distributed to students did not clarify the relevant SLOs or course assignments associated with them.

The goal of the Pathways Learning Outcomes Assessment Project, conducted in April-May 2020, was to evaluate whether the SLOs have been uniformly communicated at the course level. A selection of course

<sup>23</sup> Pathways General Education Requirements. <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/gened/>

<sup>24</sup> Learning Outcomes for the Required Common Core. <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/gened/req-commoncore/Required-Common-Core-LearningOutcomes.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Learning Outcomes for the Flexible Common Core. <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/gened/flex-commoncore/Additional Information About the Flexible Common Core rev.pdf>

syllabi from approved general education courses from each of the eight Common Core areas were evaluated to answer the following two questions:

- 1) Are the Pathways student learning outcomes listed on the syllabus?
- 2) Are activities or assignments included on the syllabus that indicate students will meet the student learning outcomes?

Of CUNY’s 19 undergraduate institutions, 10 colleges (five senior, two comprehensive, two community, and one professional) participated in the project. At each college, up to two courses and two sample syllabi from each course were randomly selected for each of the eight Common Core areas, and evaluated according to the above two questions (i.e., a minimum of 16 courses and 32 syllabi per college). A total of 303 syllabi were evaluated by the assessment directors of the 10 colleges, and included in further analyses. Each syllabus was coded based on the following four categories: All (100 percent of student learning outcomes/assignments were included on the syllabus); Most (50 percent or more included); Some (less than 50 percent included); or None (0 percent included).

**TABLE 19. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR COMMON CORE COURSES**

All Colleges/Common Core Areas					
Learning Outcomes			Assignments		
	N	%		N	%
All Included	139	46%	All Included	130	43%
Most	60	20%	Most	96	32%
Some	24	8%	Some	25	8%
None	80	26%	None	52	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>100%</b>

Overall, 46 percent of the syllabi included all SLOs, and 43 percent included assignments clearly associated with the SLOs. However, results varied among the Common Core areas, and among colleges and departments. Key findings include:

- Of the syllabi including all SLOs, according to the initial evaluation, some included the SLOs verbatim, while others included modified versions of the SLOs.
- Syllabi including all SLOs did not necessarily include all associated assignments, and vice versa. If a syllabus includes assignments associated with all SLOs, the faculty may be aware of the student learning outcomes of the course. However, if the SLOs are included but assignments are not, it is unclear whether the course activities clearly match the SLOs.
- Syllabi reviewed for the English Composition area showed the highest percentages for student learning outcomes/assignment inclusions. Of the 38 syllabi reviewed for the English Composition area, 84 percent included the SLOs and 71 percent included assignments clearly associated with those SLOs. Syllabi for Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning, on the other hand, showed the lowest percentages: of the 34 syllabi reviewed, 35 percent included the SLOs and 18 percent included assignments.
- Differences among the colleges were even more prominent. The percentages of syllabi that included all student learning outcomes ranged from 9 percent to 94 percent, and assignments from 25 percent to 66 percent. However, these differences could be due to the departments or

individual faculty whose syllabi were selected for the project, not necessarily due to the colleges' overall practices. Nonetheless, some of the colleges reported that this project served as a fruitful opportunity for new discoveries and actionable "lessons learned." For example, one college says it will launch a new syllabus review project to modify the current template, to ensure that the student learning outcomes and associated activities are included on the syllabi going forward.

### **Follow-Up on Year Three Recommendations**

Recommendations that resulted from the Pathways Year Three Review not addressed above include a recommendation to ensure transparency of the Common Core Course Review Committee (CCCRC), as well as greater transparency for students about their right to appeal the denial or restriction of their transfer credits. Accordingly, the Task Force requested additional analyses of these important issues.

#### *Common Core Course Review Committee*

The Common Core Course Review Committee (CCCRC) was established in March 2012. This committee, consisting entirely of faculty, reviews courses submitted by the colleges to ensure they meet the designated student learning outcomes for their Common Core curricular areas. In its current format, the committee is divided into two subcommittees, each with its own chair. One of these subcommittees reviews course submissions for the areas Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning, Life and Physical Sciences, Individual and Society, and Scientific World. The other subcommittee reviews course submissions for the areas English Composition, Creative Expression, World Cultures and Global Issues, and U.S. Experience in Its Diversity. Beginning in Fall 2020, the CCCRC will operate as a single committee of faculty that will review submissions for all Common Core areas.

The Central Office of Academic Affairs created a brief survey for members of the CCCRC to obtain feedback about the course review process. The survey questions were vetted by the two subcommittee chairs. Among the 36 members of the committee, 28 responses were received, for a response rate of 78 percent.

Survey results suggest more awareness is needed among faculty about how to develop successful Common Core course proposals. Thirty-two percent of CCCRC respondents disagreed with the statement, "faculty understand how to develop successful course proposals for the CCCRC." There was a similar amount of disagreement with the statement, "there is widespread understanding at the colleges about what the CCCRC requires in order to approve a course." However, 89 percent of CCCRC respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "the CCCRC's feedback is helpful and is used constructively to make revisions."

The CCCRC advises colleges to take more time upfront to build thoughtful, clear, and detailed submissions. Revisions are often requested because the CCCRC is not able to find evidence that the student learning outcomes will be met. The following comments made on the survey elucidate these recommendations:

- *Demonstrate what assignments satisfy the relevant SLOs. Explain how the assignments in questions satisfy the SLOs. And finally, make sure those assignments are discussed thoroughly in the supporting syllabus or other submitted documents.*

- *The syllabus should clearly relate to the representations made on (the Course Submission Form) and offer ample support for the claims that have been made there.*
- *Be specific on what you include in your syllabi, being sure they directly fulfill the SLOs.*

The CCCRC also recommends that communication be improved between the Central Office of Academic Affairs and the colleges, the CCCRC and colleges, and within the colleges.

- *Representative college curriculum committee chair or member from each campus should maintain a direct liaison with Pathways committee member on a regular basis to make things move faster and reach desired outcome.*
- *I took what I learned to my campus via a CETLS workshop to help faculty better prepare their submissions, I think this helped.*
- *I find that the process is misunderstood by faculty at my school. It is important for the CCCRC members to be available during this process to help faculty at their school with submission forms, assessment plans and syllabi.*

When asked about how the CCCRC operates as a committee, responses were favorable overall. For example, 82 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “CCCRC members understand what standards should be taken into consideration by the CCCRC when approving a course, and what aspects of the course are the purview of the college,” and 79 percent agreed or strongly agreed that “the CCCRC is a good forum for dialogue and collaboration amongst faculty.” Eighty-two percent of respondents would recommend that their colleagues join the CCCRC if given the opportunity. The following comments provided on the survey suggest that CCCRC members value working with and learning from their CUNY colleagues.

- *This is a very well organized and high functioning committee. Its respect for governance and its leadership is high.*
- *Colleagues who have served on their UCASC or departmental committees and want to participate at a broader CUNY wide level . . . will likely find this illuminating and hopefully satisfying. Enjoyed learning from colleagues with more experience on panel and being exposed to different disciplines.*
- *It was very educational to meet, talk, and participate in decision-making process(s) . . . and notice lively discussion on pedagogical matters deemed to be very relevant to Pathways core mission. Quite often, exchanges were hotly debated and ultimately resolved by having acceptable recommendations put forward to the proposer. Pathways Committee provided a venue where faculty from various campuses met and interacted with collegian respect.*
- *At this time, with the need for distance learning and remote participation in every aspect of our work, I still value our face-to-face meetings and hope they will eventually be (safely) restored.*

The orientation offered for new members of the CCCRC may need strengthening. Eighteen percent of respondents disagreed, while 25 percent were neutral, that the orientation provided was helpful. Additional resources, such as a standardized orientation and course review checklists should be created to ensure all members are prepared to provide more guidance on how to navigate the differences among colleges, review submissions fairly and consistently, and respect colleges’ choices.

**TABLE 20. CCCRC SURVEY RESULTS**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Faculty understand how to develop successful course proposals for the CCCRC.	0%	32%	36%	32%	0%
There is widespread understanding at the colleges about what the CCCRC requires.	4%	29%	32%	32%	4%
The CCCRC's feedback is helpful and is used constructively to make revisions.	0%	7%	4%	70%	19%
CCCRC members understand what standards should be taken into consideration.	0%	7%	11%	46%	36%
Established principles of academic freedom and local college governance are respected.	0%	0%	21%	43%	36%
The CCCRC is a good forum for dialogue and collaboration amongst faculty.	0%	4%	18%	32%	46%
The CCCRC review process instills confidence in the curriculum and course offerings.	0%	0%	39%	29%	32%
The orientation provided to CCCRC members at the beginning of their term is helpful.	0%	18%	25%	29%	29%
Providing a calendar of the CCCRC review cycle assists the colleges and committee to plan.	7%	0%	7%	50%	36%
You would recommend that your colleagues join the CCCRC.	0%	0%	18%	46%	36%

SOURCE: CUNY Office of Undergraduate Studies, April 2020

### *Student Appeals*

The Pathways resolution called for the establishment of an appeals process for students who wish to appeal the denial or restriction of their transfer credit. In response, colleges were required to appoint an appeals officer and establish a student appeals process. The Central Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) also adopted procedures for handling student appeals that had received a negative determination at the campus level. Guidelines and procedures were developed and posted on the CUNY Pathways website.<sup>26</sup> Each academic year, OAA receives approximately 10 student appeals that received a negative determination at the local campus level, and then reviews these appeals and issues guidance.

In March-May 2020, OAA surveyed the Pathways appeals officers of 18 undergraduate institutions. This is a follow-up of the appeals officers survey conducted in 2016, which found the campuses had widely divergent definitions of an appeal. A total of 16 colleges (six senior, three comprehensive, six community, and one professional) responded to questions regarding their appeals processes and provided data about the numbers of appeals received during the 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 academic years. Currently, tasks of appeals officers are assumed by various positions across campuses, including: faculty (3), deans (2), and directors/managers/coordinators (11).

A total of nine colleges indicated there is a committee for Pathways appeals on their campuses, composed of faculty and/or administrators; one of the nine colleges has students, in addition to both

<sup>26</sup> Student Appeals Process. <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/rightsandresponsibilities/student-appeals-process/>

faculty and administrators, on their committee. The other seven colleges do not have a formal committee to review student appeals.

To evaluate the transparency of the appeals process, OAA asked the appeals officers to share links to the webpage with Pathways appeals information on the college website. Just three colleges have separate webpages with specific information about the Pathways appeals process and contact information. Twelve colleges have limited information regarding Pathways appeals, including either contact information and a link to the cuny.edu webpage; only contact information, but no information about processes or links to more specific information; only a link to the cuny.edu webpage; or only an appeals request form. One college includes no information regarding Pathways appeals on its website.

There is great variability in the number of appeals processed at each college. Ten of the 16 colleges indicated they did not receive any appeals during the three academic years. Three colleges reported that approximately 10-20 appeals were received in each of the three years. The remaining three colleges processed a substantial number of appeals over the three-year period – 188, 313, 1,248, respectively. Interestingly, two of the colleges with a substantial number of student appeals have transparent, student-friendly Pathways appeals webpages. Colleges that have received no student appeals, or a low number, should consider providing information more broadly to students about their right to appeal and the process for doing so.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the detailed analysis overseen by the Pathways Year Six Evaluation Task Force, it is clear that Pathways policies are fully implemented and functioning well. Pathways offers substantial benefits for students and is vitally important for the overall functioning of the University, an integrated system with substantial transfer flows. Although CUNY students continue to encounter barriers related to transfer, these barriers are not specifically related to Pathways, for the most part. Focusing closely on the Pathways curricular structure and transfer credit guarantees, the Task Force has identified specific areas for improvement in order to enhance opportunities for students and improve student transfer at CUNY. Accordingly, a number of recommendations are offered to strengthen the impact of Pathways.

1. Analyze current implementation of the existing Pathways Gateway Majors, develop campus-specific action items to improve implementation, and increase the number of participating Pathways Gateway Majors. There are currently 10 Gateway Majors included in Pathways, yet some popular majors such as computer science, accounting, and finance are not included. Analysis of existing curricular requirements and articulation agreements might help identify degree programs that could readily participate in existing Gateway Majors, such as accounting programs that include the business Gateway Courses. The Central Office of Academic Affairs could develop new draft Gateway Majors and invite a response from discipline councils or program chairs, existing discipline councils could develop new Gateways, or interested disciplines that do not currently have a council could be convened.

Implementation issues, such as the absence of identified Gateway Courses in certain programs, should also be clearly identified through curricular analysis. The education and nursing Gateway Majors should be reviewed for possible implementation issues. Finally, a list of all degree

programs that participate in the Pathways Gateway Majors should be clearly identified on websites and in college catalogs and distributed widely.

2. Review campus policies such as overlay requirements, residency requirements, and acceptance of transfer credit to ensure CUNY students do not encounter inconsistent policies or barriers as they pursue their degrees. Preliminary analysis suggests that students encounter overlay requirements that they cannot complete with other requirements for general education or the major, thus adding to the total number of credits they must complete for their degree. The transferability of overlay requirements such as writing intensive courses should also be considered. Currently, there are no University guidelines or criteria for writing intensive courses, and such courses are not always accepted as meeting writing intensive requirements at other CUNY colleges. Residency requirements should also be considered and analyzed carefully to determine if these requirements violate the principle of full transfer as guaranteed within Pathways. Such requirements were designed for the residential college of the past, and transfer students may have different types of experiences that are also valuable. Other examples of local policies that violate Pathways should be addressed, such as rejection of transfer credit from other CUNY colleges and curricular requirements that do not align with the general education framework stipulated by Pathways. Finally, although the Task Force did not conduct an analysis of ePermit,<sup>27</sup> implementation of ePermit policies and processes should be reviewed to ensure students are able to appropriately complete degree requirements at CUNY colleges other than their home college.
3. Take steps to improve the student experience of transfer and gather additional data from students about the implementation of Pathways. The two key recommendations that resulted from the detailed interviews and focus groups conducted by MDRC's Center for Applied Behavioral Sciences (CABS) in collaboration with CUNY<sup>28</sup> should be embraced. These include incorporating transfer planning as part of the regular degree planning process, and better bridging the gap between institutions for transfer students. Transfer planning should include providing information to students about the Pathways curricular structure and transfer guarantees, the "What-If" feature of DegreeWorks that shows students how their credits will transfer, and the transfer credit appeals process. Transfer advisement tools and resources should be developed as needed. It is also recommended that colleges automate the transfer credit evaluation process and develop a system to flag students who register for courses that do not contribute toward degree requirements.<sup>29</sup>
4. Widely publicize the student appeals process at the campus level to improve awareness of the right to appeal the denial or restriction of transfer credit; the process should adhere to CUNY standards, definitions, and tracking procedures. The Pathways resolution required the establishment of an appeals process for students who wish to appeal the denial or restriction of their transfer credit. However, evidence suggests that students may not be equally well

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<sup>27</sup> The City University of New York. Office of Academic Affairs. (2017, December). CUNY policies on ePermit. [http://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-](http://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/registrar/resources/epermit_policies-REVISION-December-2017-FINAL.pdf)

[assets/about/administration/offices/registrar/resources/epermit\\_policies-REVISION-December-2017-FINAL.pdf](http://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/registrar/resources/epermit_policies-REVISION-December-2017-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Condliffe, B. & Sutcliffe, S. (forthcoming). Barriers and opportunities to improve transfer student experiences (Working Paper). MDRC.

<sup>29</sup> The ACT project (Articulation of Credit Transfer), funded by the Heckscher Foundation, is currently being implemented at Lehman College and Hostos Community College to implement projects such as these to address inefficiencies related to credit transfer. <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/oira/policy/a2b/act/>

informed on all campuses about their right to appeal the denial or restriction of transfer credit. Colleges that have received no student appeals, or that have a low number of appeals, and who do not have clear and transparent information about the campus appeals procedures on their website must provide information more broadly to students about their right to appeal and the process for doing so. Advisors at both the community and senior colleges should provide information about the student appeals process to students, both prior to and after transfer occurs. Colleges should consider providing such information as part of the standard process for sharing results of the transfer credit evaluation. Such information should be easily viewable on college websites and catalogs.

5. Ensure that student learning outcomes (SLOs) for Pathways courses are included on course syllabi. In the interest of student rights and to ensure that colleges meet the standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, it is strongly recommended that colleges ensure the Pathways SLOs are listed on the course syllabi of all Pathways approved courses. Pathways courses have been approved through local campus governance processes and through the CCCRC based on demonstration that the course will address the required SLOs. Inclusion of the SLOs is integral to both the course receiving Pathways credit and being eligible for Pathways transfer credit at other CUNY colleges. Inclusion of the SLOs on course syllabi offers clarity and transparency for students about what they should expect to learn in the course.

It is also important to note that colleges must complete program level assessment of the general education curriculum, as required by Middle States. Such assessments could consider the breadth of offerings available in the Common Core and College Option, the SLOs covered in different areas of the general education curriculum, and how the curricular offerings and objectives map to the overall goals of the college as well as to student interests and professional goals. Additionally, it is recommended that campuses assess the alignment between the Pathways SLOs and course assignments and activities that are designed to address the SLOs. Completion of this assessment work necessitates inclusion of the SLOs on course syllabi and is critical to the overall Institutional Effectiveness of the college. Colleges that do not have dedicated staff to manage and assess the general education program should plan for establishing and staffing such oversight and assessment.

6. Bolster support of those who serve on the Common Core Course Review Committee, improve awareness of the course review process on the campuses, and strengthen communication. The Central Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) should be more deliberate about offering a detailed orientation for CCCRC members and periodic refreshers. OAA should also develop more resources for both the CCCRC and for the colleges. These might include user guides or checklists. OAA may also encourage and support more channels of communication between the CCCRC and the faculty and staff making submissions. Colleges might revisit and bolster their internal process for Common Core submissions. For example, do they have internal deadlines to allow a pre-review and possible edits before submission? How do they communicate this process within their college?
7. Plan for the next scheduled review of Pathways. The next review will be required for Year Nine during the 2022-23 academic year. The Pathways Common Core framework and the SLOs should be examined at that time in light of current needs. There may be areas of the curriculum that need bolstering, such as communication skills, computational thinking, and interdisciplinary learning.