

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

New York City public high school graduates' need for remediation at CUNY started early. The patterns established in the early grades persisted through high school and influenced performance during freshman year of college. By applying statistical analysis to demographic and longitudinal academic data generated by June 1997 high school graduates, we found the following:

- Successful BOE students tended to be Asian or white; come from Asia, Eastern Europe or the former USSR if born outside the United States; be proficient in English; master basic skills by the end of 8th grade; attend a private school in 8th grade and a good public high school; and earn a Regents diploma. If these students went to CUNY, they required little or no remediation. However, to many, CUNY was the university of last resort – all but 701 out of 3,811 graduates of the best public high schools – those whose students earned the highest SAT scores – and 1,332 out of the 7,826 Regents diploma graduates went somewhere else to college.
- In contrast, the BOE tended to under-serve students who are black or Hispanic; come from Puerto Rico or, if born outside the US, the Caribbean countries; have limited English proficiency (LEP). Unsuccessful BOE students were those who were promoted out of 8th grade before mastering basic skills; attended a public school in 8th grade and a failing public high school; and failed to earn a Regents high school diploma. If they went to college at all, many of these students went to CUNY, where they placed into remediation and advanced slowly toward a degree.
- In estimating the need for remediation among BOE graduates at CUNY, the most powerful indicators were leaving 8th grade without mastering basic skills in reading and math; being LEP; coming from Puerto Rico or the Caribbean countries; scoring poorly on the Regents English and math exams; and failing to earn a Regents diploma.
- Similarly, in anticipating poor performance during the CUNY freshman year – in terms of completion of remedial credits and advancement toward a degree – the most important indicators were LEP status and leaving 8th grade without mastering basic reading and math skills. Many students who were remedial in elementary school never caught up.

Our research highlighted the central importance of the ability to comprehend, read and write English and indicated that far too many BOE students move through the system without mastering these skills. From the Task Force reports on *Open Admissions and Remedial Education at the City University of New York* (1999) and *CUNY's Testing Program: Characteristics, Results, and Implications for Policy and Research* (1999), we know that CUNY's writing assessment and ESL placement instrument is inadequate and that there is a good chance students will not receive the writing

and ESL instruction they need. Moreover, as some CUNY colleges use passing the WAT as a gate for exiting remediation, gaining certification and graduating from a degree program, there is no guarantee that a CUNY graduate is a competent communicator. It seems that nowhere along the K-16 continuum of New York City public education is a student's English language ability fully diagnosed and treated.

The very process of our research was also revealing. We found that, although the BOE and CUNY share a student population and all the related educational challenges, they have no common education strategies. Their goals, curricula and evaluation protocols are entirely incongruent. Without the sound information that coordinated and consistent measurement protocol would supply, the BOE and CUNY cannot possibly allocate resources to the best advantage. No wonder so many students are under served.

To highlight the short-comings of the BOE is not to excuse CUNY from finding effective and efficient methods of remediating under-prepared BOE graduates who enroll on its campuses. Indeed, this study illustrates the impact of 30 years of open admissions policy on the City's public schools, which the Task Force's report on *Open Admissions and Remedial Education at the City University of New York* lays out so clearly. Today, a bloated post-secondary remediation operation co-exists with a dysfunctional public school system, and they feed off one another.