

### III. Project Design

The remedial education project was designed to provide answers to the following questions:

- How is remedial education defined for this project?
- How many students are participating in remedial education?
- How much does the University expend for remedial education in total?
- How is remedial education funded?

This report begins with a definition of remedial education and that then provides the basis for studying remedial education participants, expenditures, and sources of funding for remedial education at the university.

#### A. Approach

Two primary issues — the need for agreement on the definition of remedial education and for an analytical framework for analyzing expenditure — drove the development of project design. The project approach and resolution of these issues were also defined by a number of project limitations.

##### 1. Definitional issues

- Diverse national views regarding which types of programs and services constitute remedial education.
- Impact of the breadth or narrowness of the definition on findings about both the expenditures and outcomes of remedial education.
- Implications of definition on subsequent discussions about policies for addressing student remedial education needs.

##### 2. Analytical framework issues

- The most appropriate organizational level for analyzing the data to understand expenditures, e.g., System or college.
- The ability of CUNY's information systems—electronic and manual—to provide data necessary to conduct the analysis.
- The activities and functions to be expeditured to develop a reasonably accurate perspective on the direct instructional and other expenditures of providing remedial education programs and services.

##### 3. Limitations

Although PwC was able to expand the scope of previous remedial education studies, there were a number of data points which we were not able to capture due to CUNY's procedures for allocating funds to colleges, CUNY's use of information systems, and the project's overall time limitations.

- a. *The analysis does not include an audit of the financial data or systems.* There was no intent, nor has there been an effort by PricewaterhouseCoopers, to conduct an audit of CUNY's data or the information systems that provide the data. However, while PwC was unable to gather data directly from the CUNY record-keeping systems, we have worked closely with CUNY executives and staff to assess the overall quality of the data used and determine its applicability to the analysis conducted.
- b. *Revenue sources at the individual college level are based on PwC calculations and not directly from CUNY reports.* Financial and budgeting systems for CUNY, as for most colleges and universities, do not track unrestricted revenues, such as governmental appropriations and tuition, by functional programs and activities, such as instruction. Accordingly:
  - Revenue from tuition and fees for individual programs are calculated based on remedial student FTEs for all programs except those that are funded through a designated source of funds (e.g., pre-freshmen immersion program, SEEK/CD and other specific grant programs for CUNY students)
  - The distribution between city and state appropriations for individual programs is based on the same distribution of funds that the colleges receive from the city and state
- c. The analysis does not identify or separate expenditures for any ongoing instruction of underprepared students in regular, degree coursework. Anecdotal reports at CUNY and many other colleges and universities suggest that faculty members must spend extra time or modify their course syllabi in many undergraduate courses to accommodate deficiencies in reading, writing, and mathematical skills of many students, not only those who do not pass the University's basic skills screening tests. Although this is an important issue, the scope of this analysis does not include this larger issue.
- d. Time and financial information system constraints preclude PwC from collecting expenditure data for all activities related to remedial education, such as curriculum development and faculty professional development. For a number of these functions, the information system does not have function object codes to track the expenditures of various activities. Appropriate allocations of faculty time could be accounted for and attributed to the expenditures of remedial education, but would require extensive interviews and considerably more time than is available for the present analysis. Limited or inconsistent enrollment data for instruction provided through adult and continuing education restricted the ability to capture consistent adult and continuing education information and include it in aggregate participation calculations.

## B. Defining Remedial Education

Defining remedial education for the purposes of this study was a lengthy and complex task, due to the host of economic and political ramifications inherent in an overly narrow or overly expanded definition of programs that constitute remedial education. In response, we created the definition of remedial education, but also decided to capture high-level data on Outreach Programs in order to further the Task Force's understanding of additional basic education programs and services provided by CUNY.

As noted above, early in the project it became very apparent to PwC consultants, to the Task Force staff members conducting interviews with CUNY executives, faculty, and students, and to the Rand consultants also working for the Task Force, that there are very diverse views regarding what encompasses or should encompass remedial education at the City University of New York.

- Traditionally, the University limited its definition of remedial education to basic skills and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) courses provided by the colleges to full-time CUNY students. This definition describes the population most frequently cited in discussions about remedial education, and was the basis of an earlier expenditure study conducted by CUNY.

- There are many other activities (e.g., immersion programs, continuing education basic skills courses, and collaborative programs) related to basic education that fall outside the traditional CUNY definition of remedial. Many of these programs and activities also address the reading, writing, and mathematical deficiencies of prospective and incoming CUNY students.
- Similarly, there are other programs and services (e.g., preparation for the General Equivalency Diploma and literacy programs) that address the educational needs of underprepared students, but which do not warrant the remedial education designation.
- Ultimately, for the purpose of this analysis—and to provide direction to the policy discussions of the Mayor's Task Force—the array of programs were sorted into two areas: **remedial education** and **outreach programs** for the general public.
- This report further divides **remedial education** into three subsets:
  - Core remedial education programs: basic skills, ESL, language immersion (and pre-freshman immersion, where data is available).
  - Continuing education programs that provide basic skills and ESL.
  - Other remedial education programs: Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) and College Discovery (CD) and programs funded through grants.

The **remedial education** programs included in this definition, as summarized in Figure 1 on the following page, capture CUNY's involvement in all remedial programs and activities for both degree and non-degree seeking CUNY students. This definition also includes the basic skills and ESL courses offered through continuing education. This definition does not include activities or courses that comprise or are integral to a course of study, certificate program, or degree program.

The category of **outreach programs** included in this definition, and summarized below, specifically excludes academic enrichment programs for high achievers.

**Figure 1: Remedial Education vs. Outreach Programs**

**Remedial Education**

**Definition:** Programs that help underprepared CUNY students achieve success in post-secondary education

1. Basic Skills Program for regular, matriculated students
2. English as a Second Language (ESL)
3. Summer and Language Immersion programs
4. Adult and Continuing Education programs that provide Basic Skills and ESL
5. Counseling, tutoring, and other services for remedial students in the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) and College Discovery (CD) programs provided respectively by senior colleges and community colleges

**Outreach Programs**

**Definition:** Programs for the general public designed to enhance educational attainment and improve workforce readiness

1. Adult and Continuing Education programs that provide educational attainment enhancement (e.g., General Education Equivalency preparation)
2. Collaborative programs that promote basic education skills (e.g., Liberty Partnership Program)
3. Institute/Center programs that promote basic education skills (e.g., York College Learning Center)

For the analysis presented in Section VI, the basic skills, ESL, and immersion programs are clustered as the “remedial core,” with SEEK/CD and other grant programs clustered as “other remedial.” Enrollment data issues require considering continuing education separately.<sup>1</sup>

**C. Creating the Analytical Framework**

1. The Need

In response to the Task Force’s request, PwC created a framework for analyzing the expenditures of remedial education that would both broaden the traditional definition of remedial education and provide greater detail on sources and uses of remedial funds.

In addition to determining an appropriate definition for remedial education, PwC needed to determine the type of financial analysis that would present a useful picture to the Mayor’s Advisory Task Force of the financial sources and expenditures related to remedial education and outreach programs. To develop this picture, we created a three dimensional framework for capturing data related to these definitions,

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<sup>1</sup> See section III.A.3.d, on page 4.

functional expenditures (e.g., instruction and testing), and the units of organizational analysis (e.g., system and college). Additional considerations reflected in the analytical framework include:

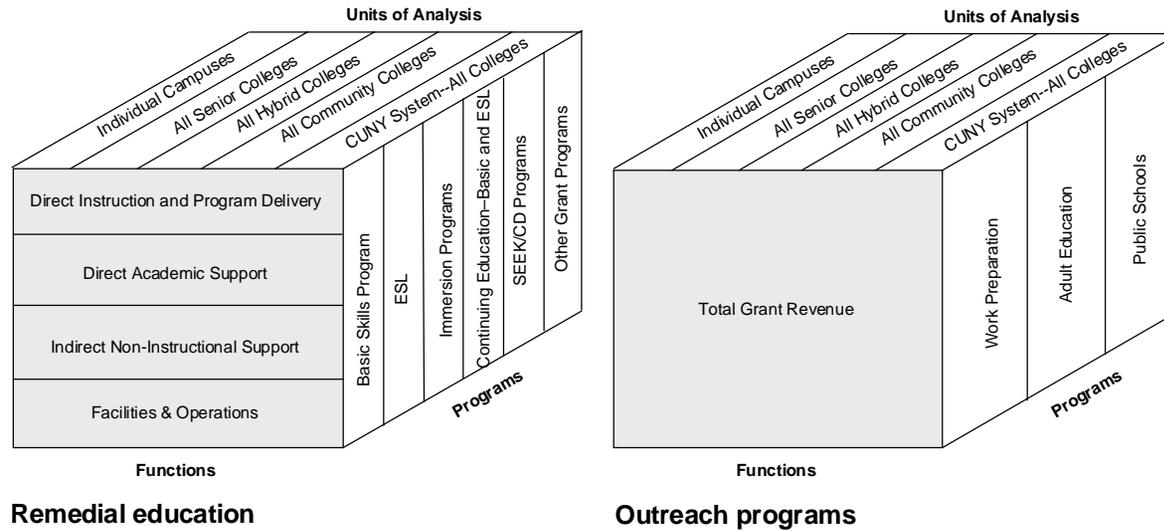
- While the PwC data collection methodology is similar to that employed previously by the CUNY System office for describing expenditures for remedial education, the analytical framework used in this analysis provided greater precision in the definition of expenditure categories and includes a broader array of programs, as described on the previous pages.
- The previous CUNY expenditure studies on remedial education only break down expenditures into three main categories: direct instruction, non-instruction, and fixed expenditures. Though similar, the expenditure categories in this analysis provide a more detailed picture of the direct and indirect support expenditures (e.g., academic counseling, enrollment management services, academic computing, and administrative computing).
- Due to the time and information system capability limitations described above, the analysis only captures and reports on total expenditures for the outreach programs.
- The financial analysis provides the Task Force with a realistic picture of the sources of funds supporting remedial education and outreach programs.

## 2. The Framework

This framework allows us to study the expenditures of remedial education through three major categories of analysis: Programs, Functions and Units of Analysis.

- **Programs:** The array of instructional, tutorial, and counseling services embraced by the definitions of remedial education and outreach programs.
- **Functions:** Four levels of expenditure categories. Information on the explicit sub-functions captured within each level is presented in Appendix B.
- **Units of Analysis:** The organizational levels for which revenue and expenditure data are collected and analyzed.

**Figure 2: Framework for Remedial Education Analysis**



The value of using these three dimensions and the analytical framework is reflected throughout the remainder of this report as we present the financial analysis “findings and observations” for remedial education and outreach programs for the general public.