THE BEST OF TWO WORLDS

LESSONS FROM A COMMUNITY COLLEGE-COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION COLLABORATION TO INCREASE STUDENT SUCCESS

Prepared by The Youth Development Institute for Jobs for the Future

BACK ON TRACK
PATHWAYS THROUGH POSTSECONDARY

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The mission of the **Youth Development Institute** is to support local and national youth-serving organizations to provide quality services to young people. YDI works with its partners to test strategies, disseminate promising practices, and inform policies that aid in the healthy transition of youth into adulthood.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New York City's College Access and Success Initiative (CAS) focuses on improving the odds of success for young people who have graduated from failing high schools, are recent immigrants, or who have dropped out and then attained a GED. Begun in 2004, it demonstrates how colleges and community organizations can integrate education and youth development to improve student success.

CAS brings together:

> **The New York City College of Technology**—City Tech—is a college within the City University of New York system.

> **The Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation** is a community-based organization that provides housing development and human services in East New York. (Good Shepherd Services, a citywide youth development, education, and family-service agency, joined CAS in 2010.)

> **The Youth Development Institute**, an intermediary, develops, supports, and assesses practice and policy innovations in New York City and nationally.

The Best of Two Worlds seeks to build understanding of:

> The needs and strengths of young people who are underrepresented in higher education and who too rarely complete a credential; and

> The ways that youth development organizations and colleges—institutions that rarely work together and that have differing strengths, sizes, and professional cultures—can collaborate to improve student success.

The results are encouraging. To track student outcomes, YDI compared CAS students who entered City Tech from fall 2005 to spring 2009 to similar students entering City Tech during this same period, using data from City Tech. CAS students have graduated from City Tech at more than twice the rate of their peers from the same community in East New York, and 75 percent of the graduates have gone on to Bachelor's programs.

TACKLING A MAJOR SOCIETAL CHALLENGE

In 2004, the Youth Development Institute brought together representatives from six community-based organizations and the central offices of the City University of New York and the New York City Department of Education. These CBOs and agencies had a common interest: to increase college success rates for youth who had struggled in high school before finally graduating or who had dropped out and obtained a GED. They designed CAS to pilot a college-CBO collaboration rooted in principles of youth development.

CAS represents a new level of collaboration between a college and a CBO. The partners have worked hard to clarify a variety of elements, such as: what it means to have high expectations in each organization; how to create continuity of supports for individual students in a complicated and large institution; what kinds of relationship must be in place to create wraparound supports; and what staff skills must be developed to do this work.

A core element of CAS is a monthly meeting of college and CBO staff, facilitated by YDI. The meetings are at the center of a range of activities that reduce obstacles and increase student capacity and motivation. They help build a common understanding among the key people who interact with each student. At each session, the CBO presents information about the students and anything that might affect their academic progress. The college brings data about the students' courses and performance, sometimes covering several years. This includes such information as placement test scores, course registrations, grades, financial aid status, and number of remedial courses taken and passed. The two presentations, informed by continuous interaction with the students, provide a way for the team members to communicate with one another and guide their ongoing work with the students.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

Because Cypress Hills recruits students who underperformed in the school system, they often face severe academic challenges. The experience of students in CAS has taught CBO and college staff just how much work must be done, both before and during college, to get students to the point of completing a credential or degree.

The Primary Person Approach: In this youth development approach, staff members connect each young person to an adult who guides, advises, brokers, coordinates, and advocates for him/her throughout the entire course of a program. CAS adapts that, assigning two people, one at the CBO and one at the college, to each participant. The CBO counselor focuses on personal issues and supports, while the college counselor helps students navigate college.

Getting Students Ready Before Enrolling in College: CAS has significantly expanded the amount of time project staff work with students before they enroll, as well as the number of ways staff do so. Once CAS students enroll in college, both counselors closely monitor their grades and academic progress. Tutoring services are available at both City Tech and Cypress Hills. The Cypress Hills counselors stay in touch with students who have academic problems. In addition to weekly phone calls, they reach out through emails, text messages, and instant messages.

College-friendly Employment: Jobs at Cypress Hills or City Tech often connect directly to their education, and their supervisors reinforce the importance of schooling versus pulling them away from it. This also serves as another important means of personal support. It enables students to earn money while respecting their academic schedules.

SOCIAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL PREPARATION

While academic skills are essential, being ready for college involves a wider range of skills, habits, and attitudes. CAS has tackled these in a number of ways.

Workshops run by Cypress Hills are the main strategy for introducing young people to what they need in order to succeed in college. The topics include skills that relate to academic work (e.g., how to organize time; how to address conflicts). Students receive assistance with transportation directly from Cypress Hills as an incentive strategy of the program. They receive Metro Cards when they come into the Cypress Hills office for their weekly meetings with CBO counselors.

Cypress Hills counselors also teach students how to seek help. The counselors have noted that while students get used to asking for help at Cypress Hills, they may still be afraid to do so outside the safety of the CBO. In fact, a counselor may sit with them the first time they make a difficult phone call, modeling for them how to advocate for themselves—teaching by example.

The CAS support system helps students navigate the complexities of college so that they make the right decisions in a timely fashion. The mechanisms for this are a system of structured supports at the earliest stages in the process of preparing to enter college and highly proactive work by the counselors at all times.

BUILDING BLOCKS TO INCREASED SUCCESS

The high level of institutional cooperation in CAS suggests a structure upon which other efforts can build without huge cost—not just in colleges but also in workplaces and other postsecondary programs. The initiative's combination of academic and/or vocational preparation, with youth development supports rooted in the young people's own neighborhoods, sustains the engagement and boosts their development.

In addition to CAS, a body of work is emerging from efforts undertaken by a number of organizations—including, among others, Jobs for the Future, YouthBuild USA, Portland (Oregon) Community College, and the National Youth Employment Coalition. These efforts, often with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation support, provide a strong foundation on which to build and increase the legitimacy of the CBO role in collaborating with colleges.

If our nation is to draw upon the resources of all of its young people, and to reduce the social costs of those who fail to progress to independent adulthood, we must create a range of postsecondary pathways that combine investments in education, work, and youth development. There is encouragement from the kind of collaborative arrangement that CAS has piloted, along with those being tested by a number of other programs that are part of Jobs for the Future's *Back on Track* initiative.

INTRODUCTION

At the age of 21, Charles is a high school graduate and a father. A few years ago, he enrolled at the New York City College of Technology but failed the writing placement test and had to take a remedial class. Although he qualified for full financial aid, it did not cover expenses for books or transportation to and from school. But Charles persisted and earned an Associate's degree.

Sophia, 20, enrolled at the college on a student visa to study architecture. In her first few semesters, she struggled to juggle her class load with a full-time work schedule. Sophia graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor's degree.

These two young people live in Brooklyn's East New York neighborhood, one of the nation's poorest communities. Few would have predicted they would attend and succeed in college, given profiles that match those of the 75 percent of students who do not obtain a degree.

Charles came from a failing high school and Sophia attended high school in Colombia. Their success comes with the support of New York City's College Access and Success Initiative (CAS). The initiative focuses on improving the odds of success for young people like Charles and Sophia who have graduated from failing high schools, are recent immigrants, or who have dropped out and then attained a GED. Begun in 2004, CAS demonstrates how colleges and community organizations can integrate education and youth development to improve student success.[1]

CAS brings together several institutions:

> **The New York City College of Technology:** City Tech, a college within the City University of New York system, serves 15,400 students annually in both Associate's and Bachelor's degree programs;

> **The Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation:** This community-based organization provides housing development and human services, serving 9,000 residents in East New York annually; and

> **The Youth Development Institute**, an intermediary, develops, supports, and assesses practice and policy innovations in New York City and nationally.

Good Shepherd Services, a citywide youth development, education, and family-service agency, joined CAS in 2010 when the program received a new grant from the National Youth Employment Coalition, with funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Good Shepherd is not a focus of this paper which is based largely on work before that time.

A predecessor to this report, *Building a Better Bridge*, by Michael Chavez Reilly (2008), describes the experiences of students and staff in the early stages of CAS. This report describes the initiative's key components as they have evolved over five years. It explores the practices, challenges, and policy implications of this innovative programming.

The two reports seek to build understanding of:

> The needs and strengths of young people who are underrepresented in higher education and who too rarely complete a credential; and

> The ways that youth development organizations and colleges—institutions that rarely work together and that have differing strengths, sizes, and professional cultures—can collaborate to improve student success.

The results are encouraging. According to data from the college, CAS students have graduated from City Tech at more than twice the rate of their peers from the same community in East New York, and 75 percent of the graduates have gone on to Bachelor's programs.

TACKLING A MAJOR SOCIETAL CHALLENGE

Although it is a relatively small program, CAS offers valuable lessons for addressing a large social challenge. Today, unemployment for youth without a college degree is at the highest levels ever recorded; in contrast, the unemployment

rate for those with a college degree is about half that of the overall national rate and far lower than for dropouts.[2] Possessing a college degree is now a key determinant of long-term financial stability and success. According to a 2010 U.S. Census report, workers with a high school diploma earned an average annual salary of $21,569; those with a Bachelor's degree earned $42,783.[3]

College has other benefits as well. *Passing the Torch*, a longitudinal study of the effects of the open-admissions policy that CUNY instituted in 1970, documents the educational achievements of three generations (Attewell et al. 2007). The study, which followed a group of women admitted to CUNY between 1970 and 1972, found striking results among the women as well as their children. Comparing the record of the CUNY alumnae to peers nationwide, it found that women from "underprivileged" backgrounds are more likely to go to college. Moreover, their children are more likely to succeed in school and earn college degrees themselves. John Garvey (2010) points to another, rarely cited benefit: college can help young people to realize strengths such as their intellectual capacity.

Yet the nation's record on postsecondary attainment is poor. At the City University of New York, the major college placement for most New York City high school graduates, only 18 percent of students who began as Associate's degree candidates in 2003 had earned an Associate's degree six years later, and only 11 percent had earned a Bachelor's degree. For young people who leave high school and attain a GED, the rates are markedly lower. Only 12 percent of GED holders who entered into CUNY Associate's degree programs in fall 2001 earned any kind of degree or certificate within four years, compared to 18 percent for those with a high school diploma.[4]

The reasons for these poor rates of college success are many. The students who participate in CAS face a combination of challenges. These include the need to develop the academic skills, habits of mind, academic behaviors, and "college knowledge" that foster college success and are required to navigate the system and take responsibility for their own learning. Many students also lack material supports, such as transportation fares and money for books. Others have family and child care obligations that divert their time and focus.

Yet these young people bring strengths as well: supportive friends and family; skills in navigating challenging situations; and a determination to make it, sometimes sustained for years. Supporting them means helping them address their challenges while recognizing and nurturing their strengths. At times,

it means helping them recognize these strengths, as young people can be dismissive of their own qualities.

Since the recession began in 2008, the work of initiatives like CAS has gained urgency. Shrinking workforces, the loss of entry-level jobs, and decisions by older workers to delay retirement, among other factors, mean that even as the nation inches out of the recession, employment opportunities are lacking for young adults who have not completed postsecondary education or training. Further, given budgetary challenges at all levels of government, few new dollars are likely to be devoted to young adult development in the coming years.

These factors exacerbate changes that predate the recession. The transition to full adulthood and independence is moving to ever later years in the lives of American adolescents.[5] Key benchmarks such as marriage and full-time employment are occurring later in life. Such changes affect families as economic necessity and pushes youth to remain at home into their late 20s, straining household budgets.

If our nation is to draw upon the resources of all of its young people, and to reduce the social costs of those who fail to progress to independent adulthood, we must create a range of postsecondary pathways that combine investments in education, work, and youth development. In this context, public community colleges offer one avenue where large numbers of young people can build their skills and readiness for employment. There is encouragement from the kind of collaborative arrangement that CAS has piloted, along with those being tested by a number of other programs that are part of Jobs for the Future's *Back on Track* initiative.[6]

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

We were getting a higher percentage of students who are over-age and undercredited or who have dropped out. They come in pretty regularly and say, "I'm sick of my dead-end job, I want to go to college." They've either graduated high school but not gone on to college or dropped out of high school and want to go to college but don't have their GED.

—Megan Grey, former College Steps Director, Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation

Many students stop out and then return; others alternate between full-time and part-time status as their lives permit. It can take a long time. Our degree programs offer a real opportunity, though, and we want to do much better than 18 percent success in six years.

—Bonne August, Provost and Vice President, New York City College of Technology

In July 2004, the Youth Development Institute brought together representatives from six community-based organizations and the central offices of the City University of New York and the New York City Department of Education.[7] They had a common interest: to increase college success rates for youth who had struggled in high school before finally graduating or who had dropped out and obtained a GED. These CBOs and agencies formed the New York City Partnership for College Access and Success. They designed the CAS initiative as a way to pilot a college-CBO collaboration rooted in principles of youth development identified by YDI:

> Caring relationships with adults and peers;

> High expectations;

> A welcoming environment;

> Opportunities to master skills and competencies;

> Continuity of supports over time;

> Opportunities to contribute; and

> Engaging activities.[8]

Through a competitive process, the Youth Development Institute selected the New York City College of Technology as the college and Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation as the CBO, awarding grants funded primarily with private dollars. Vivian Vázquez of YDI, with a unique background as both the founder of a small high school and a leader of a community-based multiservice organization, became the project director. YDI continued to convene the larger partnership as a network of stakeholders to learn from the pilot and disseminate promising practices to their constituencies.

BUILDING EFFECTIVE COLLEGE-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Shaping the college-CBO collaboration was a careful analysis of what was needed to create a structure of support that would work for young people and draw on the strengths of each partner.[9] It also draws upon experience and evidence from other settings, such as those of school-CBO collaborations in the Multiple Pathways Initiatives of the New York City Department of Education. These partnerships demonstrate that CBOs can contribute to student engagement and success in educational institutions (YDI 2008). In an analysis of the CAS partnership, as well as other educational-CBO collaborations, John Garvey, a former CUNY administrator who established many of its major efforts to improve graduations rates, writes (Garvey 2010):

> Such organizations [CBOs] are generally seen by young people as friendly institutions where they will be welcomed and supported. They have many of the characteristics that the colleges do not. They are committed to meeting young people where they are and to enabling them to realize the potentials that have been thwarted by more or less hazardous environments.

The CAS structure also reflects an understanding of the role that an intermediary can play in institutional collaborations

to improve educational attainment. In this case, YDI as the intermediary serves as a neutral partner in CAS. YDI addresses challenges as they arise, facilitates the relationships among players, manages data, raises funds, and draws out and disseminates the lessons learned from the project.

YDI also cultivates a youth development perspective among all of the participants, helping build a common understanding of this approach and a common language among the collaborating institutions. While it is not unusual for a CBO to take a youth development approach, it is uncommon in the postsecondary field. And only recently have the principles of youth development been accepted widely as an explicit part of the design of new high schools.[10]

CAS represents a new level of collaboration between a college and a CBO. Each partner has worked hard to clarify a variety of elements, such as: what it means to have high expectations in each organization; how to create continuity of supports for individual students in a complicated and large institution; what kinds of relationship must be in place to create wraparound supports; and what staff skills must be developed to do this work.

Says Emily Van Ingen, director of programs at Cypress Hills:

> We've always had some collaboration with local universities, but with this program the levels of communication have increased. Being able to talk directly to the provost and the administration has made a huge difference. We've never had access to higher administration before.

In turn, Provost Bonne August of City Tech says, "CBOs are an important part of our safety net." She adds:

> Our students face complex situations that require complex responses. I worked in adult education for years. I thought I knew the story. The reality is much more complicated and serious now. A significant percent of our students need comprehensive care. The level of assistance needed has increased.

FUNCTIONS OF THE COLLABORATION

The partners jointly developed a CAS agreement that lays out the roles of each organization in the collaboration. It addresses these areas:

> Information sharing;

> Extending networks that benefit the program and the students;

> Creating "college friendly" job placements for students;

> Bridging the partners' cultures;

> Committing to long-term relationships with students; and

> Funding.

See Appendix I for the Partnership Agreement that guides the collaborating organizations. See Appendix II for the major roles of each organization.

INFORMATION SHARING

Staff from Cypress Hills and City Tech meet each month to discuss how CAS students are doing. The attendees include the provost, the dean of curriculum and instruction, and academic advising staff. Staff from Cypress Hills include retention counselors and the director of college access and success programs. With YDI facilitating, the partners review data about student courses and performance, as well as qualitative information about student performance and what is happening in their lives. The discussions lead to a deeper understanding of each student than would be possible if each partner acted without the insights of the other. Discussions of individual students yield guidance on such topics as: how to help those who are struggling academically; what courses to take to pursue a major of choice and minimize the waste of financial aid; what internships and employment opportunities are available; and what referrals to a range of social, health, and financial services are appropriate.

Through these meetings, staff members decide on follow-up actions. The discussions also lead to a better understanding of how the program as a whole is serving this cohort of students and what gaps can be addressed. This has resulted in several changes in CAS. For example, the partners now make sure that each student works with just one college staff member in the administrative offices, strengthening each young person's sense of consistency and personal support.

EXTENDING NETWORKS THAT BENEFIT THE PROGRAM AND THE STUDENTS

Partners pool their resources to help students access developmental courses, financial aid, employment, housing, and child care. The college staff members bring expertise about the resources available on campus and how to access them. In addition, Cypress Hills runs an employment program and has a child care center, both of which offer important benefits to the students. Staff working at Cypress Hills can pick up the phone to connect to a whole range of services. Cypress Hills keeps its knowledge of these services current through monthly meetings among staff members from all its programs.

CREATING "COLLEGE FRIENDLY" JOB PLACEMENTS FOR STUDENTS

CAS students repeatedly voice the value of flexibly scheduled jobs that are located on campus or at the CBO. Most of the participants commute to school and work every day, and many have child care responsibilities; jobs with flexible scheduling help them manage their time and cut down on transportation costs.

CAS students have observed that jobs at Cypress Hills or City Tech often have a direct connection to their education. For example, a human services major has worked as a counselor at the Cypress Hills Beacon, a school-based community center. Supervisors in the jobs reinforce the importance of completing college.[11]

BRIDGING THE PARTNERS' CULTURES

YDI structures CAS as a collective effort. While the CBO and the college share a common goal for student success and degree attainment, their approaches differ. YDI helps the partners see the value in these differences and resolve issues in ways that are productive for the students. For example, after CAS's first semester, City Tech staff were disappointed about student performance. Cypress Hills staff felt more positive because the students persisted and planned to return the following semester. YDI emphasized the importance of both perspectives, focusing on a youth development approach of promoting high expectations while helping students achieve realistic goals.

COMMITTING TO LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

The partners make a commitment to establishing a long-term relationship with each student. Other efforts to serve similar student populations usually operate for only the first semester or the first year. CAS seeks to get students through not just the first year but all the way to graduation. This unique organizational consensus, which provides consistency and support for students, requires stable staff and leadership, regular meetings of the partners, agreed-upon mechanisms for getting things done, shared values, and a willingness to use institutional resources.

FUNDING KEY COMPONENTS

Both partners raise funds for CAS. Regrants from YDI, while small, have been important in engaging the partners, especially in the early days of the project when the potential for this type of partnership was not widely recognized. Partners also raise their own funds separately. These organizations have used most of their grants to pay counselors. Cypress Hills raises additional funds to provide students with Metro Cards, books, prizes, and other incentives to continue their education.

KEY COMPONENTS

The College Access and Success Initiative takes its key features directly from the youth development field and applies them to support the goal of college readiness and success:

> The "primary person" approach;

> The transition to college;

> The student conference;

> Academic preparation and ongoing support;

> Social and developmental preparation;

> Ongoing advisement; and
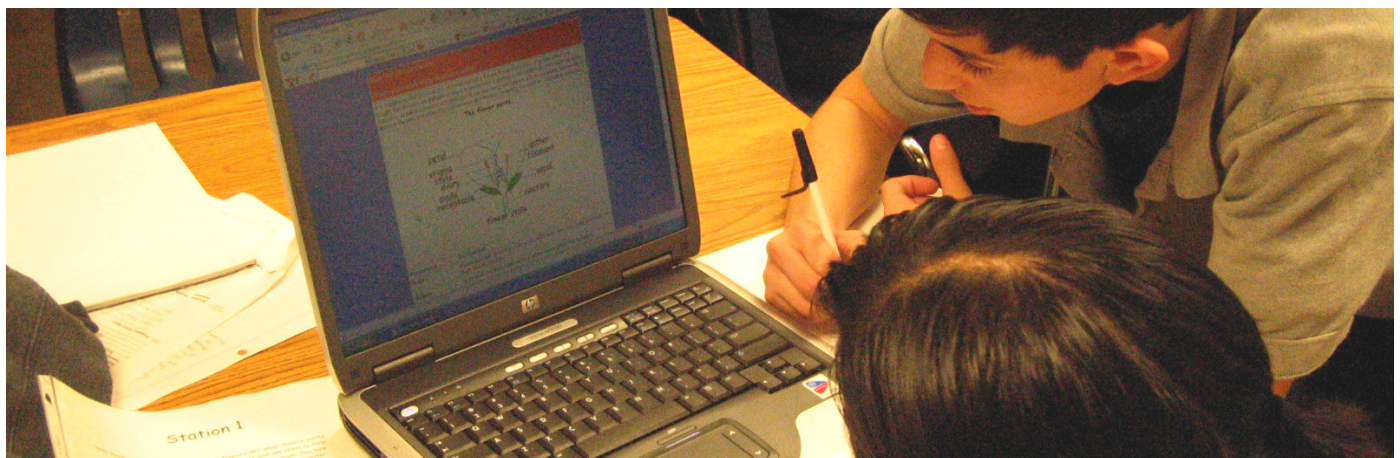
> Peer communities.

THE PRIMARY PERSON APPROACH

Cypress Hills, like many leading CBOs, has implemented what is known as the "primary person" approach.[12] Staff members connect each young person who enters a program to an adult who guides, advises, brokers, coordinates, and advocates for him/her throughout the entire course of the program. This differs from traditional counseling in several ways. One is that the primary person advocates for the student with other adults. Another is in the sustained relationship with the students, staying with them sometimes for many years.

CAS adapts the primary person approach, assigning two people, one at the CBO and one at the college, to each participant. The CBO counselor focuses on personal issues and supports (medical, social, legal, financial, family) while the college counselor helps students navigate college (selecting courses; locating financial aid; negotiating with faculty about papers, exams, and majors). Both counselors emphasize the study habits young people need in order to become academically successful. They urge students to dedicate substantial levels of time and effort to learning. The counselors "are always pushing you forward," says one student.

Coordination between the two primary people is another distinguishing feature of CAS. To further this, the CBO counselors visit City Tech once a week to meet with students. They quickly learn about emerging issues, often before they become major problems.

Students report these visits are extremely helpful: "Chris [counselor Christopher Mosley] will call me and leave a message. 'I'm downstairs. Come down and see me when your class is over.'" This on-campus presence reminds students of their links to the CBO, as well as the presence of both

supervision and support. It also ensures that the City Tech CAS advisors and the Cypress Hills counselors meet regularly. Both counselors also participate in the monthly student conference.

THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

CAS recruits students through Cypress Hill's family and peer networks in East New York. Many find out about the program through relatives or friends, and others come to CAS through participation in various Cypress Hills programs. Most students already know Cypress Hills—and they often know the particular staff members with whom they will work. In many cases, students' family members have been involved with Cypress Hills for years. These relationships translate into trust and a bond between the organization and each student. The idea of engaging a CBO as a key player in student success is based in part on the existence of these relationships and the CBO's deep commitment to the success of young people from its community.

INTAKE

Cypress Hills has a storefront office in its East New York neighborhood that houses the college access and success programs. This is the home office for the counselors. Potential students come here to fill out an intake form that mirrors the types of form colleges will require of them for admission. In addition to providing basic demographic information, the students fill in such things as educational history (e.g., schools attended, GPA) and financial information. Several open-ended questions require students to reflect on their educational past, their interests and goals, and their perceived barriers to achieving those goals.

From there, counselors engage students in exploring colleges and careers and in revisiting their goals. During these sessions, students use Web-based tools (e.g., Career Cruising), read CUNY materials, and ask questions. These sessions also introduce students to the CAS program.

THE COUNSELOR AND ADVISOR MATCH

Cypress Hills immediately matches each student with a CBO counselor who helps them assess their goals, review their educational past, and envision a path through college.

For most CAS students, academic, geographical, personal, and other constraints limit the college search, and after these sessions, most are ready to apply to City Tech or another CUNY campus. City Tech candidates begin working on financial

aid applications with the assistance of their CBO counselors and guidance from City Tech advisors as needed.

City Tech advisors Vanessa Villanueva and Lourdes Feurtado have been with CAS since its inception and know the needs of its students intimately. In fact, both are former City Tech students, women of color, and mothers. Their advice to students includes official information and the tacit knowledge that helped them succeed at City Tech. They take a personal interest in the students, many of whom come to see them as role models as well as academic advisors. Feurtado says:

> I see me in them. I went to school here. I had my problems and almost dropped out. Vanessa [Villanueva] was the one who kept pushing me to keep at it and stay in school. I was her work-study student. After that was done, I worked here part-time. Then I got a job here full time. So it's because of her. Now I have a CAS student who is my work-study student.

CAS students have an orientation meeting with Villanueva to review their academic plans and financial aid packages. Students then register with Feurtado or with Tikisha Clarke, who joined the program in 2009. Both serve as primary advisors, and both have detailed knowledge of the requirements, credits, and courses necessary for students to move from where they are to where they need to be to graduate. Advisors help students learn how to research which instructors might be best for them. For continuing CAS students, there is a double registration process: every semester they see Feurtado or Clarke to register and then they register with their major advisor in their department.

STUDENT SUCCESS PLAN

The first CAS requirement, once students have been accepted into City Tech, is to work with the CBO counselor to complete a Student Success Plan. The success plans identify academic and personal goals for each semester. The students work with their CBO counselor to think through the concrete steps they need to take to reach these goals.

ENTRANCE EXAMS AND COURSE ENROLLMENT

Students then get an appointment to take CUNY's entrance exam (the COMPASS) to assess their skills in reading, writing, and math. After the college receives the results of the exams, students meet with their City Tech advisors to register for classes. Students who pass all three exams register for credit-bearing classes. Students who fail one, two, or three exams

enroll in remedial classes in those areas to build their skills. The advisors usually refer students who fail all three exams to the Brooklyn Educational Opportunities Center to complete remedial classes without using up precious financial aid on remediation.

Students meet and register with this same counselor both before entering and after choosing a major. This differs from the usual CUNY practice in which students meet with general advisors before declaring a major, and then change to a departmental advisor. Like other CUNY students, CAS students have departmental advisors once they declare a major, but they maintain their relationship with their CAS CUNY advisors throughout their college careers.

THE STUDENT CONFERENCE: REVIEWING AND TAKING ACTION TO ADVANCE STUDENT PROGRESS

A core element of CAS is the monthly meetings of college and CBO staff, facilitated by YDI. The meetings help build a common understanding among the key people who interact with each student and get everyone pushing in the same direction.

At each session, the primary person from the CBO presents information about the students and anything that might affect their academic progress (e.g., level of engagement, motivation, health, family, employment issues). The primary person from the college brings data about the students' courses and performance, sometimes covering several years. This information includes placement test scores, course registrations, grades, financial aid status, number of remedial courses taken and passed, GPA, credit accumulation, and retention from one semester to the next. The two presentations, informed by continuous interaction with the students, provide a way for the team members to communicate with one another and guide their ongoing work with the students.

Given the short amount of time available, each meeting focuses on a limited number of students who are identified as needing extra attention or who have demonstrated success. Staff leave the meetings with plans for following up with each student.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

Because Cypress Hills recruits students who underperformed in the school system, they often face severe academic challenges. The experience of students in CAS has taught CBO and college staff just how much work must be done, both before and during college, to get students to the point of completing a credential or degree.

GETTING STUDENTS READY BEFORE ENROLLING IN COLLEGE

Students need substantial, coordinated preparation before entering college. To support them to succeed in college, CAS has significantly expanded the amount of time project staff work with students before they enroll, as well as the number of ways staff do so:

> Cypress Hills conducts the Bridge to College Program, a series of four classes to practice critical thinking skills and prepare students for CUNY's entrance exams. Cypress Hills also refers students to CUNY's University Skills Immersion Program, a summer program to prepare students for the entrance exams.

> Through the Student Success Center at the Cypress Hills College Counseling Center, 14 high school students who have been trained as peer counselors help the CBO's college counselors make CAS participants aware of what preparation for college entails. Students from Sarah Lawrence College also teach a class on writing college essays.

> In spring 2010, Cypress Hills offered a college preparatory pilot class to GED students. Because it was not well attended, Cypress Hills asked CUNY to train two staff members who then strengthened and restructured the course.

> CAS taps other CUNY programs, including its successful College Transition Initiative and CUNY Start programs. CAS also mines other efforts for elements it can adapt to its work, including CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs and President's Prep at Kingsborough Community College.[13]

TRACKING ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND ADDRESSING ACADEMIC STRUGGLES

Once CAS students enroll in college, both counselors closely monitor their grades and academic progress. Many students struggle academically. Indeed, after the first year, 40 percent of the students did not enroll for the subsequent year. To

address this problem, the project has intensified pre- and post-enrollment supports and follows up on students who stop out.

Tutoring services are available at both City Tech and Cypress Hills. During the first year of CAS, students rarely took advantage of these, a topic that was discussed at the network meetings. In response, YDI and the partners made CAS more structured. Now, CAS asks students who are in danger of failing after they have received their midterm grades to provide documentation that they are getting tutoring at City Tech or at Cypress Hills. Tutoring attendance is then tied to the student's eligibility to receive book vouchers. When CAS students fill out their student success plans, they are asked to commit to attending Cypress Hills-run workshops. The workshops teach study and life skills and connect students to peers.

CAS has sought to tighten the incentive structure by tying Metro Card and textbook stipends to student goals and making attendance at orientation mandatory. In addition, students must reach certain benchmarks as the condition for stipends and rewards.

As City Tech advisor Vanessa Villanueva explains:

> We've learned it needs to be very structured from the beginning. We need to be clear on the benefits so they know the support is there—transportation, books, and tutoring. Then they have no excuse to fail. But we also show them that there are consequences for not living up to their part. We teach them how to be responsible both for school and for life.

The Cypress Hills counselors stay in touch with students who have academic problems. In addition to weekly phone calls, they reach out through emails, text messages, and instant messages. Nonetheless, counselor Yahaira Bello says, "It takes time and effort to look for these students. Sometimes I have to stalk [them]. Students change cell phone numbers and emails. Some students move. I've even visited houses."

CAS also provides college-friendly employment, and this has served as another important means of personal support. It enables students to earn money while respecting their academic schedules. As an added benefit, students who work on campus become more familiar with the college. Jobs at Cypress Hills or City Tech often connect directly to their education, and their supervisors reinforce the importance of schooling versus pulling them away from it.

OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH SERIOUS ACADEMIC DEFICITS

If students continue to struggle academically, CAS offers alternatives for support. For students who are having trouble passing remedial courses, City Tech counselor Lourdes Feurtado suggests the Brooklyn Educational Opportunity Center, described earlier. Students can take remedial classes for free, rather than use up their financial aid on remedial classes that provide no credits toward graduation. CAS is looking increasingly to such programs as sources of academic preparation as CUNY strengthens its pre-enrollment supports for students.[14]

If a student's GPA remains low, s/he has the option of a new start at another CUNY community college, with the prior GPA wiped away. Several students have taken advantage of this option.

SOCIAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL PREPARATION

While academic skills are essential, being ready for college involves a wider range of skills, habits, and attitudes (Conley 2007; Garvey 2010). CAS has tackled these in a number of ways.

BUILDING SKILLS, SHIFTING EXPECTATIONS

> First semester, you think it's like high school. I show up, my teacher takes the attendance, and I'm going to get a passing grade. But when midterms and papers show up, then you realize it's not just about showing up. High school students think they know it all. But when you go to college you realize you have no idea about taking good notes, time management, how to study well. You even need to learn how to sit in a class for an hour-and-a-half lecture without getting impatient.
> —CAS Student

CBO staff dedicate significant time and effort to preparing students for a culture very different from what most of them experienced in high school. The workshops run by Cypress Hills are the main strategy for introducing young people to what they need in order to succeed in college. The topics include skills that relate to academic work (e.g., how to organize time; how to address conflicts).

Members of the first cohort of CAS students often described the transition from high school to college as a shock and consistently remarked on the higher level of expectations and performance demanded in college. As first-generation college goers, many CAS students bring with them tremendous uncertainty and self-doubt about their abilities to succeed in college. In addition to financial barriers, some lack confidence in their own decision making. Or they have "the dream" but do not know the steps to success. They wonder, "Will I be encouraged? What will I go for?" The counselors work with them to address these anxieties and not let them become disabling.

THE DRILL AND PRACTICE OF ASKING FOR HELP

Cypress Hills counselors teach students how to seek help. The counselors have noted that while students get used to asking for help at Cypress Hills, they may still be afraid to do so outside the safety of the CBO. In fact, a counselor may sit with them the first time they make a difficult phone call, modeling for them how to advocate for themselves—teaching by example.

Lourdes Feurtado at City Tech employs the same approach. A key part of CAS is "to drill and practice asking for help," she explains. "Ideally their entire support system drills into them this message—their family, their advisor, their counselor. It also helps them with life in general—it's a life skill."

"I tell students to be vocal about problems," Feurtado adds. "They have to have a voice. I find that the ones who don't speak up more often than not drop out."
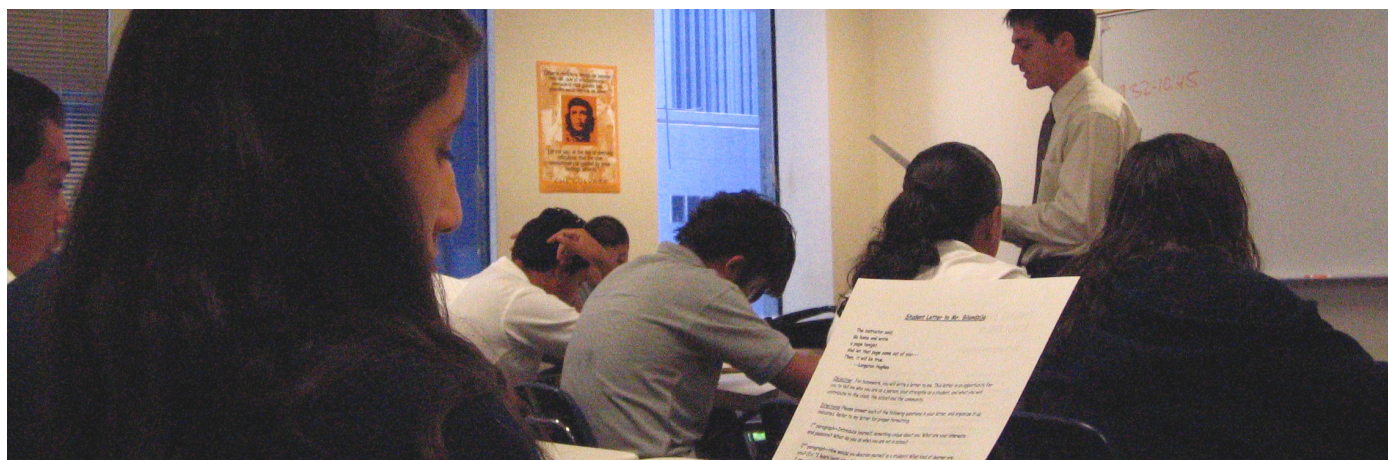
Those in the first CAS cohort cited learning to ask for help from other students as well as from staff members as a crucial skill. By the senior year, some students who are shy and private have learned the value of networking. Staff pushed a student who could not decide on a career to ask questions of specific people in positions of authority. As he gained more confidence, he came to realize that "asking people for information was no big thing."

Another student, after sending out dozens of resumes, says she "used what they taught me in the CAS program about networking" to land a job in the midst of a recession by talking with her neighbor. As students come to trust their relationships with counselors, they also form relationships with faculty and mentors in their major fields. One student who was afraid to talk to a professor is now being mentored by that same professor, whom he regularly visits during office hours.

LEARNING THE SYSTEM: DEVELOPING "COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE"

It's all too easy to get lost at City Tech, with 16,000 students and busy administrative units. Even small oversight can have large consequences on college success, yet too often students do not understand these consequences. Failure to register in a timely manner reduces the number of classes a student can choose from. Failure to maintain a B average, even in the first semester, can make a student ineligible for a particular major. Applying late for financial aid may result in only partial coverage—or none—and make college unaffordable. Also, the financial aid system penalizes those who change majors, since aid is time limited. Students who feel vulnerable to academic failure, financially strapped, or unsure about their ability to succeed in college may conclude that it is best to drop out to save time and money.

The CAS support system helps students navigate the complexities of college so that they make the right decisions in a timely fashion. The mechanisms for this are a system of structured supports at the earliest stages in the process of preparing to enter college and highly proactive work by the counselors at all times. Through the collaboration of the partners, the college has established a system by which CAS students receive consistent help from just one person in the administrative offices dealing with admissions and financial aid. This helps a great deal in supporting students and preventing them from feeling lost in the college bureaucracy.

ONGOING ADVISEMENT AND SUPPORT

College is a high-pressure environment, and the complicated lives and schedules of students make even introductory advisement a complex job. The first year, especially, is a time of transition, and students need consistent help with everything from arranging transportation to finding role models. There is also a need for strong academic advisement before students enter a major.

However, the formal academic advisement process at City Tech is "very limited" for new students, in the words of one administrator. Yet "general advisement" is when students most need advice and support. Advisement is far more present and supportive once students declare a major in a department. At that point, the advisor is based in the department, knows the ins and outs of that program, and has dedicated time available. A student describes general advisement before declaring a major as "someone signing you up for classes by just following a guide book."

CAS addresses the gap by providing consistent, ongoing advisement during the first two years. One person sees students through their entire college careers. That advisor personalizes the process—getting to know the students well, meeting with them regularly, and counseling and advocating for them. "If they are having trouble, we will have an honest conversation about whether it is best to go for tutoring, withdraw from the class, or try to stick it out," says Feurtado. She adds:

> For students in competitive programs like nursing, who fail to maintain their GPAs, I give them a reality check and help them select another major if necessary. I have them speak to [the] departments directly to get a sense of the curriculum. I help them to connect with other departments in other schools if that's appropriate.

Inevitably, advisement addresses more than academic issues. It's never "just one problem," says Emily Van Ingen of Cypress Hills. "It's financial aid and child care, or it's financial aid and job loss, or it's financial aid and illness."

"Understanding the details of students' lives is critical to figuring out when . . . you cut students slack and when not," says City Tech Provost Bonne August. "Sometimes even small things can really make a difference to students' experience."

Students testify to the value of the CAS approach to advisement and support. One CAS student comments:

> Most counselors will nod and go "alright, alright, alright" and just refer you to someone else. They have five minutes for you and they don't actually take the time to help you. Vanessa [Villanueva] and the Cypress Hills counselors get to know you personally. They treat you like a friend, and so you listen to them more.

Other students observe:

> I was kind of down and depressed before I made the decision on my [current major]. I didn't know if I could get into the program, and I had already used up financial aid money on other classes. It was only after talking to my peer mentor and my Cypress Hills counselor that I realized, yes, I could get my GPA up and get in. My counselor gave me the number of the chairperson of the department and I got a list of scholarships and information about loans.

> What's nice about Chris [Christopher Mosley] is that he doesn't come at me in a way that I'm feeling interviewed. They treat you more like a friend. They ask about the personal side, not just about school. They're willing to give real advice and be honest. I don't reach out much, but when I have, they've always been very supportive and there for me.

Some youth may lose momentum now and stop out, but then return and succeed later. For these, the sustained and caring contact of the CAS counselors during the hiatus in their college participation is especially important. Indeed, success with this dimension of CAS suggests giving more attention to following up with students who stop out, both in the project and nationally.[15]

In fall 2010, CAS modified the advisement structure to some extent: Students who have earned 30 credits toward an Associate's degree receive less intensive services. Generally,

these students, called the 30+, do not meet with staff each week, nor are they eligible for Metro Cards. Cypress Hills is assessing this new system based on the progress and needs of the group. Students in the 30+ group have also taken on leadership roles in the program, and Cypress Hills is considering ways to further encourage them by offering Metro Cards and gift certificates as incentives.

PEER COMMUNITIES

> You enter college thinking, "I'm going to meet so many people," but when you get here you realize people are just there to do what they have to do.
> —CAS student

> The school doesn't really provide ways for students to be connected. It leaves it up to the students. When students feel socially comfortable, they feel more comfortable in classes. They react differently. They do better. They create support systems and networks among their friends that pass information along. They help and advocate for each other.
> —Christopher Mosley, CAS counselor, Cypress Hills

An essential part of the CAS student support system is a network of supportive and like-minded peers. Some students report that the process of becoming a serious college student means letting go of unsupportive or distracting friends. This can be challenging if the student still lives in the same neighborhood as old friends. At the same time, making new friends at commuter schools like City Tech can be difficult, and a sense of community on campus is hard to find. Many students report that it is the norm for their peers to rush off campus to go to work or child care or to study at home. Some feel that the college's common spaces, especially the cafeterias, are not conducive to schoolwork or social interaction.

To nurture the formation of student friendships, the Cypress Hills counselors organize CAS social events. Students appreciate the opportunities to reduce stress, particularly around midterms and finals. CAS counselors see having fun as an important activity for these youth, many of whom are saddled with adult responsibilities at an early age. This informal networking can break down the sense of isolation that discourages so many students. Events have included trips to the Nuyorican Poets Café, ice skating in Central Park, and rock climbing at Brooklyn Boulders. Students and counselors say that these informal activities show the students a side of their peers that may not come out in the serious-minded world of

college. One student remembers a bowling night he organized for his fellow CAS peers: "We were bowling for three hours. Some of us had a lot in common. Some of us had the same majors and didn't know it. We got to trade information about professors."

Cypress Hills counselors deliberately seek to create a "family vibe" in activities and interactions with the CAS students, an important element for those lacking family support. Students are encouraged to use the other counselors, administrators, and students in the program as resources. In the words of one Cypress Hills staffer, "We work to create a supportive and welcoming environment. This expands people's networks and fosters their potential."

The degree of trust and loyalty that CAS inspires in its students may be due partly to the long-term connections Cypress Hills has established in East New York. The CBO's counselors rely on social networks to maintain individual and group expectations and call on students to support one another.

Strong student friendships also develop through jobs at Cypress Hills or on campus. In the work environment, students share personal experiences in spontaneous and informal ways. They credit these friends with sharing their dreams, keeping them on track, and helping them make it through the tough days.

LESSONS LEARNED

CAS began as an experimental initiative to increase college success for young people who are significantly underprepared for college, whether they had struggled and ultimately graduated from a failing high school or had dropped out and later attained a GED. With only limited research or documentation on the college progression of students fitting the CAS profile, the members of the design team used their own experience and studies of other populations to develop the program. CAS invested also in knowledge development for itself and the field, including preparing the report *Building a Better Bridge* and the current paper. Meetings of the organizations involved in creating CAS also served as mechanisms for quickly disseminating the lessons learned.

Merging the experience, the research, and the development and evolution of CAS since 2004, a number of lessons emerge for supporting student success through CBO-college collaboration.

THE CAS APPROACH HAS PRODUCED ENCOURAGING RESULTS.

To track student outcomes, YDI compared CAS students who entered City Tech from fall 2005 to spring 2009 to similar students entering City Tech during this same period, using data from City Tech. By spring 2009, CAS students had earned an Associate's degree at twice the rate of the comparison group: 21 percent of CAS students who entered City Tech in fall 2005 or winter 2006 completed an Associate's degree by spring 2009.

The first-year retention rate did not differ between the two groups—50 percent for both—but CAS students demonstrated greater persistence to completion. Furthermore, when only GED holders are compared, the retention rate was 53 percent for CAS students versus 28 percent for the comparison group. GED graduates appear to benefit particularly from the additional supports provided by CAS.

YDI also sees another promising finding: CAS students who earn Associate's degrees continue their education further. Seventy-five percent of CAS student who earned an Associate's degree between fall 2005 and spring 2009 have moved into Bachelor's degree programs.

While college is a struggle for many students like those who participate in CAS, it is clear that CBOs can make a difference. Studies of outcomes for CAS students, as well as interviews with them, point to the valuable benefits to young people of the relationship between a college and a CBO. A CBO brings strengths and connections that are valuable for students and colleges. These include skills in student support, a deeply caring attitude by adults who refuse to give up on young people, and long-term bonds with students after they leave a program.

The collaborators benefit as well: City Tech administrators and staff report that they have learned a great deal from CAS. They especially cite the benefits of the monthly conferences to review student progress. At the same time, conversations with college staff and student tracking have increased the CBO's knowledge about which students are ready for college and what it takes to improve college readiness.

Currently, the partners are leveraging the learning from this work. The college is applying what it has learned to its student population more broadly and both City Tech and Cypress Hills are involved in the planning of CUNY's New Community College Graduate NYC!.[16]

A COLLEGE-CBO COLLABORATION REQUIRES CAREFUL TENDING.

The CAS partners built on the commitments of their leaders to collaborate to support the persistence and graduation of students in postsecondary education. Initially, this required the creation of an infrastructure, communication processes, and agreement to continually assess practice. Over time, the challenge was to continue collaborating, using information about results to make changes in practice that could be sustained. All partners came to realize that this work was a complex enterprise.

Through the pilot, the key collaborators learned a great deal about what drives the development of an effective partnership:

> **A long-term commitment:** Cohorts take three to eight years to complete the process toward a college degree. Collaborating organizations need time at the beginning to work out systems of communication, build trust, and learn one another's systems.

> **An analysis of resources and motivation:** Each partner must assess its own capacity and determine what it brings to the joint effort and what it needs from the other partners.

> **A top to bottom commitment:** Collaboration succeeds in part because of the involvement of leadership. Every staff person connected with CAS has signed on to the program.

> **A formal partnership agreement:** Each organization must assign point people to ensure that commitments are kept. Given the pressures on each player, it is easy to lose sight of this work.

> **Regular meetings and communication with stakeholders and key people in each institution:** Formal and informal meetings are integral to supporting the students. They tackle all levels of issues that affect how the program functions and how students are doing.

> **Understanding different cultures, practices, concerns, and policies:** Colleges need to understand how youth development, a system of supports, and a strength-based perspective get young people who have been disconnected back on track. CBOs need to understand college culture and college requirements. A distinguishing feature of the CAS collaboration is that coordination goes beyond the integration of student services. Staff from both organizations extend their professional communities, share practices, and are building a common language.

> **A neutral partner at the table:** An intermediary plays important roles. It assesses issues from the perspective of both the college and the CBO, keeps the program on track, extracts and disseminates lessons, addresses challenges, and seeks resources. CAS would not have happened without the work of YDI, which initiated the program, brought the partners together, and continues to oversee and support their collaboration.

ACADEMIC SKILLS ARE NECESSARY BUT NOT SUFFICIENT FOR COLLEGE SUCCESS.

Academic skills are essential for college success, but students also need a broader set of learning strategies, habits of mind and work, and personal and social competencies in order to develop the self-confidence, self-efficacy, and maturity to take responsibility for their own life and learning. Students who have not been successful in school need especially strong supports to develop this set of competences.

CAS has made progress in providing the experiences necessary to prepare young people and support them in college, but more work is needed in this critical area. In two related papers, *The Dream of College* and *Toward a New Model for Success for Disconnected Youth*, YDI discusses in greater detail strategies to build these and other nonacademic skills.[17]

Ongoing advisement is essential, and it differs from what most community colleges offer. The complexity of the college system, coupled with the life pressures these young adults face, erects barriers that can be insurmountable without timely information and strong support. CAS is structured so that the burden does not fall on the student alone to identify and locate help. Instead, college advisors engage with each student from the outset, and they are connected to the CBO counselors and committed to the program.

Information sharing between CBO and college staff about students and the program keeps both on track. Nationally, schools and colleges are increasing their efforts to share information that will enable them to track student progress and challenges in college. CBOs can contribute a great deal to this sharing because their staff may be privy to information that enables the college or the CBO to intervene quickly to address emerging issues and to identify and remedy gaps in the program before these result in loss of students.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES CAN PLAY A KEY ROLE IN PREPARING STUDENTS TO SUCCEED IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION.

Youth development practices contribute to resilience, persistence, and a sense of belonging, all of which are essential to the success of CAS students. These principles include:

> Wraparound services addressing a wide range of needs and strengths;

> Close guidance by and continuing relationships with primary persons, other staff and faculty, and peers;

> The skills and attitudes necessary for mastering academics (e.g., persistence, stamina);

> Goal setting and planning; and

> Continuity of support from the beginning to the end of the program.

Consistent with youth development principles, supports and incentives should be coupled with accountability. For example, students might sign a contract that they will avail themselves of tutoring services if they fall behind academically.

To support such practices, staffing is important. Not only must effective staff be hired, but they must be trained, supervised, and—once capable of doing this complex work well—sustained at reasonable salary levels. Nothing hurts a program more than frequent staff changes, especially a program that relies heavily on continuity and personal supports.

BUILDING BLOCKS TO INCREASED SUCCESS

Organizational arrangements such as those described here can be the building blocks for new and effective efforts to support student success in college. The high level of institutional cooperation in CAS suggests a structure upon which other efforts can build without huge cost—not just in colleges but also in workplaces and other postsecondary programs. CAS combines the strengths of community organizations with those of a major educational institution. This combination of academic and/or vocational preparation, with youth development supports rooted in the young people's own neighborhoods, sustains the engagement and boosts their development.

Today, there is reason to be encouraged that college collaborations like CAS can be expanded. In addition to CAS, a body of work is emerging from efforts undertaken by a number of organizations—including, among others, Jobs for the Future, YouthBuild USA, Portland (Oregon) Community College, and the National Youth Employment Coalition. These efforts, often with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation support, will give adaptations a strong foundation on which to build. They also increase the legitimacy of the CBO role in collaborating with colleges.

In New York City, many CBOs are well positioned to provide the kinds of supports that Cypress Hills and Good Shepherd are offering. As part of the New York City Department of Education's Multiple Pathways to Graduation initiative, which seeks to improve high school graduation rates for students who are undercredited and over-age, 19 CBOs partner with schools, providing counseling and overseeing work experiences. Counselors from some of these CBOs follow up with students after high school.

The high school and CBO collaborations under Multiple Pathways are producing sharply higher graduation rates for young people considered at risk of dropping out (Gutiérrez et al. 2010). Additionally, the likelihood of sustaining improvements is increased by systemic improvements—including new approaches to principal accountability, staff selection and development, school design, curricula, instruction, school culture, and collaborations with non-school organizations. This work could be extended to bridge secondary and postsecondary, so that once students enroll in college they can receive supports from staff whom they already know.

Besides support, these efforts must ensure that students enter the most suitable college programs so their chances for success are optimal. As City Tech Provost Bonne August notes, schools, colleges, and CBOs need to "do a better and more systematic job in assessing student readiness for college,

helping them to make decisions about whether and when to seek enrollment, and to what programs."

"The effort needs to begin well before college, possibly as early as ninth grade," says Dean Sonja Jackson, a key player in this effort.

At the college level, several promising efforts are under way in New York City. These have been spearheaded by the City University of New York and some of its campuses, such as Kingsborough Community College and City Tech, as well as by the Department of Education and the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity, among others.[18]

Lessons from CAS have been applied in other national sites and locally at Queensboro Community College by Queens Community House, a CBO. This suggests that modest resources would go a long way toward applying this work more widely.

Despite this progress, funding is a concern. With budget issues affecting all major institutions, colleges, CBOs, and intermediaries face strategic choices about how to use staff time and resources and which students should receive extra support. CAS is small; it also is time- and staff-intensive, both of which are central to its success. While costs are modest, expanding, strengthening, and sustaining such efforts will require funding, primarily for CBOs, from both philanthropic and public sources.

The costs extend beyond implementation. For example, staff must receive training in proven practices. Moreover, as happens with CAS, practices that lead to program success undergo constant refinement. It takes funding to ensure that lessons from the work and comparable efforts lead to adaptations that are effective and efficient.

Another concern arising from the high unemployment rate is that competition for community college has increased, potentially decreasing opportunities for the kinds of students served by CAS. These youth may lose ground unless colleges make a targeted effort to serve them.

To move initiatives like CAS into the mainstream will require the sustained involvement of leaders at the college and city level. The issues for them to address include: articulation of support for CBO-college collaboration; credit to faculty for teaching in pre-enrollment bridge programs; and financial support for CBOs to focus on the transition between high school and college and the first two college years.

MULTIPLE PATHWAYS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

The challenges are great. Three-fourths of CUNY community college freshman require remediation, and these needs are greatest among those who, like CAS students, have attended a weak high school or dropped out and passed the GED (Foderaro 2011). Clearly, stronger preparation will be necessary to enable these students to succeed in college. In particular, GED programs will need major reform before they prepare students effectively for college (Garvey & Grobe 2011).[19]

Small programs like CAS highlight the distance that needs to be covered. A broad range of efforts will be necessary to address the wide variation in student readiness, the limited capacity of colleges and high schools, and other challenges. The idea of multiple pathways, developed successfully by New York City at the secondary level, is necessary at the postsecondary level as well. This means expanding the range and capacity of programs, including college bridge programs, continued education combined with community service and internships, certificate as well as academic programs, and sustained support from high school and CBO counselors after students have left high school.

APPENDIX I
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

NEW YORK CITY PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS

ASSURING COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS FOR ASPIRING YOUTH THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN NEW YORK CITY

BACKGROUND

The New York City Partnership for College Access and Success (CAS), sponsored by the Youth Development Institute (YDI) has developed and manages a partnership to increase opportunities for college access and success for youth between the ages of 16 to 24, who have dropped out of school and obtained a GED or have been at risk of dropping out and obtained a high school diploma. The goals of the project are to:

> Increase access and retention in postsecondary education for these youth

> Implement strong practices based on research in a Local Network consisting of one or more community based organizations and/or schools and a college that utilizes the strengths of each partner to provide coherent supports to students

> Utilize the Partnership to further identify and disseminate promising practices to the Local Network, outside organizations, policymakers, and others

> Identify and address gaps in the city-wide infrastructure for creating supports and resources for disconnected youth in New York City

> Obtain additional funding to facilitate the continuing work of the NYC Partnership

This project proposes to expand the partnership to additional organizations and build on the lessons of YDI's initial pilot as well as other research and practice.

The project will support partnerships between New York City College of Technology, City University of New York (CUNY), Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC) and Good Shepherd Services (GSS). Other organizations may participate as well as resources become available.

The NYC Partnership for College Access and Success has created a structure and guidelines for working together. The key operating principles of this partnership are:

> Sharing a common premise about the need and approach: While each institution's mission and goals are different and each has specific areas of expertise and focus, each is equally committed to combining resources to help disconnected youth enter and succeed in college. Each acknowledges that its goals are mutually compatible, and that to achieve its goals, each partner alone cannot be successful and requires the cooperation of the others

> Demonstrating a commitment to work together and address the quality of the relationships within the partnership process as well as the goals of the partnership

> Identifying and monitoring both interim and long-term goals, with the aim of building a model for college access and success, strengthening each organization's capacity to serve this population, building a knowledge base and evidence to support better policy. Strategies are documented, exploring different levels of support services and opportunities, identifying the needs of students; address systemic and programmatic issues constructively

> Establishing mechanisms for working together, such as regular meetings and clear indicators of progress. Partners plan jointly and share in the decision-making process. Strategies for project implementation originate from the Local Network level

> Creating opportunities to reflect, celebrate success and address challenges: a forum to test strategies and

processes, provide feedback and discuss ideas, challenge assumptions of the work, establishing a protocol for addressing problems and challenges

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL NETWORK PARTNERS

CBO Partners for the Local Network: Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation and Good Shepherd Services. The CBO will utilize its resources to support youth in the program. These activities may include: group and individual counseling; assistance in completing college applications; assistance in completing financial aid applications; college prep workshops; accessing remedial instruction in writing, research, and/or mathematics; engaging family members; accessing relevant support resources such as books; and providing follow-up services to help youth get acclimated to college life.

Organizational

> Prepare staff through training, review of materials and interactions with the college and YDI, to support student readiness and success in college

> Create and sustain an organizational infrastructure that supports the college project

> Sustain a commitment to the project over a three-year period

CBO Qualifications

> Experience in managing programs for older/out-of-school/ disconnected youth

> Knowledge of the college admission process

> Experience with data collection and documentation

> Experience working in collaborative environments

Access

> Identify interested youth over three years of the project and each assist approximately 30 youth to enter and complete college

> Assess student readiness and help students make decisions about whether and when it is best to enter college

> Identify student strengths and gaps in readiness and address them both before and after entrance to the college

> Provide services that help youth to navigate the college admissions process including the completion of college applications, financial aid applications, and related follow-up services to ensure college admission

> Offer and/or access academic preparatory activities

Success

> Develop a cohort of students to help them support their college success

> Support college-friendly work employment activities for students

> Provide social and personal supports such as case management

> Work with the college to assure students make appropriate decisions about schedules and programs once enrolled

> Collect and report information about the activities, structure and impact on students of the pilot

Collaboration

> Work collaboratively with the assigned staff member of the NYC College of Technology to support students before and after entry into college

> Cooperate with evaluation and documentation efforts

> Submit interim and final reports to YDI that include demographic data, tracking of each student through the college, and qualitative information about the work of each partner and the college

> Attend and participate fully in monthly meetings with the college to review each student's progress and take appropriate follow-up action. monthly meetings

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

The college will utilize its institutional resources and expertise with the CBO partners, and access the strengths of these CBO partners to help students successfully enter, transition into, and to ultimately complete college.

Organizational

> Designate staff person and allocates time to work with the Local Network to develop and coordinate services for the students of the project

> Bring college resources to the table such as providing opportunities for students to participate in college preparation activities such as summer orientation, college tours, test-taking workshops, facilitating the admissions process, academic guidance and retention to ensure student access and success etc.

> Sustain a commitment to the project over a three-year period

College Qualifications

> Experience working in collaborative environments

> Experience working with CBOs

Access

> Assist youth with the admissions and financial aid process for the Local Network cohort

> Assist youth with the colleges' class registration process for the Local Network cohort

> Work closely with CBO staff to support youth through the admissions and enrollment process

Success

> Streamline the colleges' class registration process for the Local Network cohort towards completion

> Provide CBO staff with access to college departments and resources including the tutoring lab, computer lab, Student Support Services, Mentoring Services, work study, and Black Male Initiative Program

> Participate and co-lead cohort development workshops and celebrations

> Work with the CBOs to assure students make appropriate decisions about schedules and programs once enrolled

> Collect and report information about the activities, structure and impact on students of the pilot

Collaboration

> Meet regularly with the CBO Director to support and monitor the work of the pilot

> Work collaboratively with the assigned staff member of the CBOs to support students before and after entry into college

> Provide information to the CBO and YDI on student characteristics, activities and academic progress Attend and participate fully in monthly meetings with the college to review each student's progress and take appropriate follow-up action. Cooperate with evaluation and documentation efforts related to this project

> Submit interim and final reports to YDI that include demographic data, tracking of each student through the college, and qualitative information about the work of each partner and the college

YDI will manage and support the partnership work including but not limited to: Technical support, and document the work of the Local Network, capturing and communicating lessons and assisting sites to identify and adapt practices. This work will be built upon youth development principles, as well as on the lessons learned about the experience of students who have participated in the NYC Partnership for College Access and Success project.

YDI will provide regrant funds to support each partnership, the amount depending upon the funds available from the funders.

Below is a summary of each partner's commitment to the project in their own words.

CYPRESS HILLS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION:

Why are we involved in the project?

Cypress Hills LDC is very excited about our opportunity to participate in this project. It brings tremendous resources to the cohort of young people (the majority of which are from Cypress Hills) supporting them as they pursue their college education. Obtaining a college diploma is a unique accomplishment for many of our students and their families. Just over half (53%) of our community's adults have high school diplomas and nearly one in five have less then a 9th grade education.

What is the value for each organization in the partnership?

In addition we are committed to working collaboratively to bring changes to public policy regarding this population of young people and the CUNY education system.

What do we each bring to the table?

Cypress Hills LDC's commitment to the work and the students is what will make us successful in achieving the goal. We have been active in providing college access and success for the past five years, it is something we are passionate about and is true to our mission.

What do we believe we will accomplish?

We recruit the cohort of "disconnected" youth.

Our experience in college access counseling: including individual counseling support, financial aid technical assistance, workshops for parents and students, college trips

We provide a network of mutual support for the students

We offer academic tutoring, transportation and book stipends

We truly believe we will change the futures for the young people involved in the cohort as well as successful influence several parts of the CUNY system (admissions, academic advisement, student support services and remediation)

Person(s) Responsible for the Partnership:
Michelle Neugebauer: Executive Director
Emily Van Ingen: Director of Programs
Meghan Gray: Director of College STEPS program

GOOD SHEPHERD SERVICES:

Why are we involved in the project?

Serving more than 20,000 program participants annually, Good Shepherd Services seeks to address the needs of children and youth growing up in some of the highest-poverty communities of New York City, who are reaching adulthood unprepared, with little hope and capacity for long-term success. We target youth ages 0-25 who are disconnected or at risk of becoming disconnected and who are academically, economically and socially vulnerable, lacking the resources, ability to cope and interpersonal skills to make a successful transition to adulthood. Recognizing the human consequences, lost promise and costs to society of ignoring their plight, we work to break the cycle of negative outcomes for at-risk youth by investing in their potential.

The mission of Good Shepherd Services is to surround at-risk New York City youth with a web of supports that promote a safe passage to self-sufficiency. To this end we operate 10 Young Adult Borough Centers, several GED programs and 3 Transfer schools. Last year over 1,000 young people graduated from these programs with a high school diploma or GED. While we are thrilled that we are helping disconnected youth get back on track and complete their high school education—we realize that without a postsecondary degree they will be at a severe disadvantage. In the last few years we have put some resources into working with a small group of grads who have entered the CUNY system. We have seen some success in college retention—but have not had the resources to provide a more intensive and sustained effort. We are therefore very excited about this opportunity to work with both YDI and NY Tech. We have a long standing relationship with YDI and have worked on numerous projects together. A significant number of our grads choose NY Tech, so we feel this is an ideal school for us to work with.

What is the value for each organization in the partnership?

The value for GSS is to:

> Participate in a forum where we can learn new strategies and share promising practices.

> Increase our student's chances of succeeding in college.

> Advance our mission of helping disconnected youth become self-sufficient.

What do we each bring to the table?

Good Shepherd Services is a strong, mission-driven agency. We have consistently implemented and revised best demonstrated practices with high level execution across all our programs to yield the excellent programs and distinguished results that have established our brand reputation. We have a large portfolio of multiple pathways programs and have been a leader in the field, developing innovative models. We have highly competent, committed staff that articulate and reinforce our core values of teamwork, communication, respect, empowerment, education and compassion. We have significant expertise in providing counseling and youth development services to at-risk youth.

What do we believe we will accomplish?

> We are hopeful that we will develop a model for working with our graduates, in partnership with CUNY that will greatly increase their chances of success.

> Who is taking responsibility at the CBO for making decisions about the work of the partnership?

> As Executive Director, Sr. Paulette LoMonaco will have ultimate responsibility. Dr. Kathy Gordon, AED for Brooklyn Community Based Programs, will be the senior level GSS staff person on this project.

NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY:

Why are we involved in the project?

We are aware that these students are quite typical of a significant portion of our student population. The issues they bring almost certainly are the same issues that account for retention/success problems for many students. Our goal is to develop a deeper understanding of the students' needs and devise more effective strategies for meeting them. A particular challenge for us is that the students have financial needs that we cannot address. The College also has limited resources for advisement, counseling, and other needed support services.

Our hope is that by setting up relationships with community-based organizations, we can connect students to possible sources of these services and supports and thus make it possible for them to remain and ultimately succeed in college.

The college recruits students effectively; however, except in selective programs, our retention and graduation rates are low. The partnership gives us both information about our students' lives and the opportunity to work with other entities whose services are complementary to ours.

What is the value for each organization in the partnership?

The College and CUNY bring access to a multifaceted educational opportunity. City Tech is accessible and offers a broad range of degree programs at both the associate's and bachelor's levels. Many programs have a career focus, in health care or the technologies, desirable to these students. From here, they can also progress to other CUNY colleges or to a private college for further study. WE also, through long experience at CUNY, have an understanding of the learning issues that affect the progress of these students and can interpret their experiences in the classroom to our partners. In a much more specific way, we are also assisted by CUNY in providing an admissions counselor, Vanessa Villanueva, for these students. She is their touchstone at the College and the point of contact for the Cypress Hills staff person who works most closely with them. This linkage is central to the effectiveness of the program. Finally, the College, under Dean Sonja Jackson, has been identifying mentors for the students and organizing their work.

What do we believe we will accomplish?

In addition to what has already been mentioned, we are hopeful that we will develop a model for CUNY of how to work effectively with community-based organizations to help meet our students' needs. This model might address not only facilitating access to services but also the development and support of cohorts, enhanced faculty development to gain a deeper and more effective understanding of our students' lives, and coordinated mentoring of students.

Who is taking responsibility at the CBO for making decisions about the work of the partnership?

Bonne August is responsible for the academic program, including academic support services such as tutoring, and has the major responsibility. The Vice President for Student Affairs, Marcela Armoza, has not been directly involved, but her

cooperation and support are essential since the Admissions counselor and the other counselor involved report to her.

Partner Signatures

_____

Michelle Neugebauer
Executive Director
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation

_____

Sister Paulette LoMonaco
Executive Director
Good Shepherd Services

_____

Bonne August
Provost
NYC College of Technology

_____

Peter Kleinbard
Executive Director
Youth Development Institute

APPENDIX II
PARTNERSHIP CHART

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE   NEW YORK CITY PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE	
Lead agency/managing partner	
Responsible for the grant initiative	
Sub-grants to members of the Local Network	
Convenes, coordinates, and documents the activities of the Local Network and captures and communicates lessons learned	
Provides technical assistance to the Local Network	
LOCAL NETWORK	
Partnership between community-based organizations and the New York City College of Technology to support young adults enter and complete college	
Shares institutional resources (information, human, financial) that will reach more students and provide increased college access and/or success opportunities	
COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS	**NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY**
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation and Good Shepherd Services	Serves as the college partner of the Local Network, responsible for pilot implementation
> Assist approximately 30 youth annually to enter and complete college	> Designate staff person to work with the CBO and coordinate services for students in the project
> Provide services that help young adults navigate the college admissions process, including the completion of applications, financial aid applications, and related follow-up services to ensure admission	> Bring college resources to the table, including assistance in preparation activities such as summer orientation, tours, and test-taking workshops
> Provide academic preparation activities	> Streamline the admissions and financial aid process for the students
> Work with assigned staff members of the NYC College of Technology to support students	> Streamline the college class registration process for the students
> Provide social and personal supports such as case management	> Attend monthly student conference meetings to review student and program progress
> Attend monthly student conference meetings to review student and program progress	> Provide information to the CBO on students' academic progress
> Collect information about the activities, structure and impact on students of the initiative.	> Meet regularly with the CBO to support students
> Submit interim and final reports to YDI	> Sustain commitment to the project over at least two years
> Sustain commitment to the project over at least two years	> Be responsive to YDI and funders
> Be responsive to YDI and funders	

ENDNOTES

1 The College Access and Success Initiative receives funding from the National Youth Employment Coalition (through a grant from the Bill and & Melinda Gates Foundation), the City University of New York, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Mott Foundation, and, for the work of the community-based organizations, the Robin Hood Foundation.

2 For a detailed discussion of the status and implications for young adults with limited skills and degree attainment, see: Sum (2007), prepared before the current recession. For more recent information about the status of young adults, see: Leonhardt (2010) and Rampell (2010).

3 See: http://www.scribd.com/doc/64269161/Education-and-Synthetic-Work-Life-Earnings.

4 Data are from the CUNY Office of Institutional Advancement, 2008.

5 For a comprehensive discussion of this issue, see the Network on Transitions to Adulthood website: http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu.

6 See: http://backontrackdesigns.org.

7 Alexandra Weinbaum of the Academy for Educational Development proposed this project to Peter Kleinbard, then YDI's executive director. He initiated CAS in 2004. In subsequent years, YDI initiated the current paper as well as *Building a Better Bridge* as a means of highlighting successes and challenges and continuously improving the work.

8 For a detailed discussion of youth development, see: Eccles & Gootman (2002).

9 Two YDI reports at the time this initiative was starting reflect efforts to extract from the existing and limited literature what would enable formerly disconnected youth to succeed in college: *College Access and Success for Young Adult Learners*, published in 2006, and *The Dream of College*, published in 2007.

10 In planning CAS, YDI, drew on Jolly, Campbell, & Perlman (1984). Also relevant, on student engagement in college settings, was Tinto (1987).

11 Robert Ivry of MDRC, an expert on issues involving disconnected youth, has proposed developing college-based bridge programs during the summer to help students prepare for fall classes (Ivry 2009).

12 For a detailed and practical discussion of the primary person approach, see YDI (2008).

13 For information about CUNY Start, see: http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2010/06/23/cuny-start-immersion-for-freshman-applicants. For information about Kingsborough's programs, see: http://forumfyi.org/files/RB21%20CB26%20Issue%20Brief%20v3.pdf. For information about ASAP, see endnote 18.

14 The College Transition Initiative and CUNY Start are two promising examples: http://www.cuny.edu/academics/programs/notable/CATA/cti-cunystart.html.

15 In addition to formal advisement, City Tech has a coaching/mentoring program. Successful City Tech students and faculty mentor CAS students. The idea is to match each student with a mentor who has the same major or interests, with a focus on encouraging and advising. However, this program has had mixed results for CAS students. In some cases, mentors and mentees have established strong relationships, and a few mentees reported that they received crucial advice about figuring out their career goals. But some mentees have failed to respond to mentor outreach, despite multiple attempts. Some students have not reached out for help until they are deeply in trouble or are too overwhelmed to believe that they could take advantage of the help. Nonetheless, Roxana Melendez, director of faculty and student services, believes, "It is important for them to know the support is there when they need it. The student mentor connection takes a while to start up and then to build. It takes a long time to build that connection and trust."

[16] Graduate NYC!, a collaborative initiative of the NYC Department of Education, CUNY, and the Office of the Mayor, is an effort to increase graduation rates through information sharing, building of community support, and other improvements. It is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Nationally, the Gates Foundation has assumed a major role in supporting work to strengthen college completion. See: http://www.gatesfoundation.org/postsecondaryeducation/Pages/default.aspx.

[17] Both reports are available at: http://www.ydinstitute.org.

[18] At CUNY, ASAP and President's Prep (the latter at Kingsborough Community College) are showing encouraging results, albeit with a different population than CAS (Linderman & Kolenovic 2009).The design for CUNY's New Community College incorporates many important ideas for improving college completion rates. The design is imaginative and grounded in research. See: http://www.cuny.edu/academics/initiatives/ncc.html. Jobs for the Future (2009) plays a leading role in designing and implementing efforts to improve both high school and postsecondary education. The Gates and JFF websites have extensive information about these efforts.

[19] The NYC Department of Education's District 79 is working with the American Council of Education to build more effective GED programs in anticipation of the new GED. Due out in 2020, it will focus more strongly than the current GED on college readiness. For more on the New York effort, supported by MetLife Foundation, see: http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57bb4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor_press_release&catID=1194&doc_name=http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/html/2010b/pr503-10.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1.

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