



# The Power of Fully Supporting Community College Students

## The Effects of the City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs After Six Years

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**THE ACCELERATED STUDY IN ASSOCIATE PROGRAMS (ASAP)**, developed by the City University of New York (CUNY), is an uncommonly comprehensive and long-term program designed to address low graduation rates among community college students.<sup>1</sup> MDRC has been studying the effects of ASAP on low-income students with developmental (remedial) education needs at CUNY using a randomized controlled trial.<sup>2</sup> At the time of MDRC's evaluation, ASAP offered students a tuition waiver, the free use of textbooks, a MetroCard for the unlimited use of New York City public transit, access to advisers with reduced caseloads, individual career and employment services, and tutoring, all for up to three years. To maintain their status in the program, students had to enroll full time, take their developmental courses early, meet regularly with their advisers, and attend tutoring if they were taking developmental courses or were struggling academically.

The last report MDRC published found that within three years (the amount of time program services were available to students) ASAP nearly doubled graduation rates. Following up on students six years after the start of the research study, MDRC finds that ASAP both continues to increase graduation rates and enables some students to earn their degrees faster than they would have otherwise.

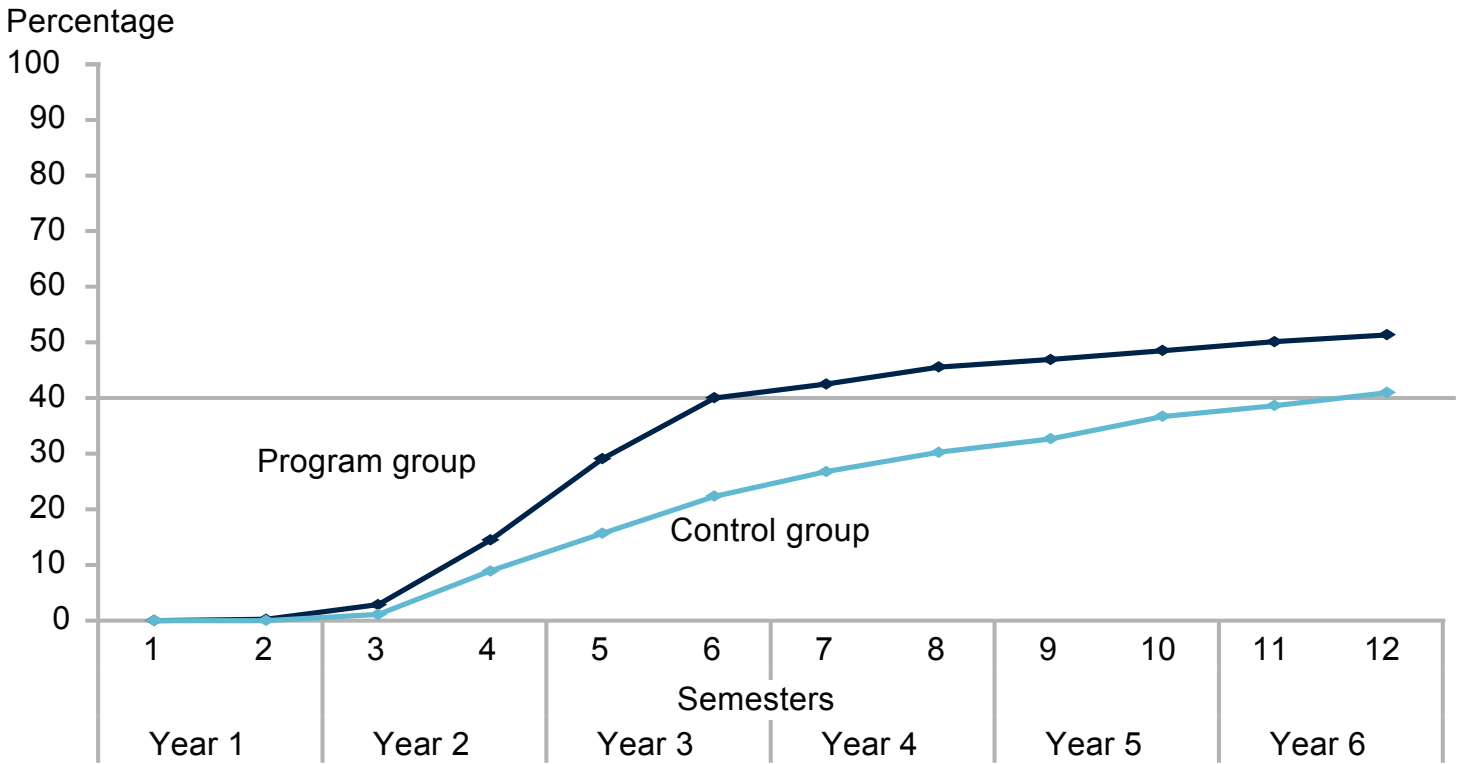
### ASAP'S EFFECTS AFTER SIX YEARS

ASAP's stated goals are both to increase the number of students who graduate within three years and to reduce the amount of time it takes students to earn degrees. This evaluation demonstrates that the program clearly succeeds in achieving those goals. Figure 1 shows the percentages of students who earned degrees over six years among those who were invited to participate in ASAP (the program group) and those who were not (the control group). By the end of two years, ASAP had already made a meaningful differ-

ence in increasing the number of students who graduated. The gap widened through Year 3, at which point ASAP had nearly doubled graduation rates: 40 percent of the program group had earned degrees, compared with 22 percent of the control group. After the program's services ended, students in both the program and control groups continued to earn degrees, and the difference between the groups began to lessen. At the end of six years, however, there was still a 10 percentage point difference between them (51 percent of program group students and 41 percent of control group students had earned degrees).

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- 1 Daniela Boykin and Amy Prince, *Inside ASAP: A Resource Guide on Program Structure, Components, and Management* (New York: City University of New York, 2015).
  - 2 Susan Scrivener, Michael J. Weiss, Alyssa Ratledge, Timothy Rudd, Colleen Sommo, and Hannah Fresques, *Doubling Graduation Rates: Three-Year Effects of CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) for Developmental Education Students* (New York: MDRC, 2015). In the spring and fall of 2010, roughly half of the students eligible for the study and interested in participating in ASAP at three CUNY colleges were selected to enroll in ASAP using a lottery.

**Figure 1 EARNED ANY DEGREE**



SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data from the CUNY Institutional Research Database and the National Student Clearinghouse.

NOTE: Estimates are adjusted by random assignment blocks and selected baseline characteristics.

Looking at the trend more closely, it becomes apparent that ASAP also helped some students earn their degrees faster. Consider that 40 percent of students offered ASAP earned degrees in three years, while the control group did not achieve the same graduation rate until Year 6. In other words, if 40 percent of students would have graduated in six years either way, ASAP enabled at least some students to earn their degrees in less time.

ASAP helps prepare students to transfer to senior colleges (those that award bachelor's degrees) through advising and other student services, but students could only participate in the program while they were pursuing associate's degrees. After six years it is possible to tell that ASAP helped students enroll in senior colleges sooner, but that eventually, comparable percentages of program and control group students enrolled in senior colleges. Similarly, program group students were able to earn bachelor's degrees more quickly than control group students, but by the end of six years similar proportions of students in both groups had earned that credential.

## CONCLUSION

These meaningful improvements in graduation rates have gained national interest, allowing ASAP to expand substantially. For the latest updates on the program at CUNY and analysis of academic outcomes for all students who have participated in ASAP at CUNY, visit CUNY's website.<sup>3</sup> In 2014, MDRC and CUNY partnered to launch the ASAP Ohio Demonstration, an effort to determine whether CUNY ASAP can be successfully implemented at community colleges in Ohio and to confirm the positive academic impacts found in the evaluation of CUNY ASAP. Early findings are promising and in line with the CUNY results.<sup>4</sup> Skyline College in California and Westchester Community College in New York are currently receiving technical assistance from CUNY ASAP and plan to have programs modeled on ASAP in place by the fall 2018 term; MDRC plans to assess the effects of Westchester's program. Policymakers and community colleges around the country can draw on the lessons of CUNY ASAP to help more students to graduate and to help them graduate more quickly.

3 City University of New York, "About ASAP Evaluation," website: [www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/evaluation](http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/evaluation).

4 Colleen Sommo and Alyssa Ratledge, *Bringing CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) to Ohio: Early Findings from a Demonstration in Three Community Colleges* (New York: MDRC, 2016).