

Analysis of Fall 2011 and Fall 2012 Three Year Graduation Rates

Introduction

In early June 2016, the University released data revealing that LaGuardia's three year graduation rate increased dramatically from 16.3% for the Fall 2011 cohort to 20.0% for Fall 2012. Initial reactions asked 'What did we do in Fall 2012 that we didn't do in Fall 2011?' " Sometimes the answer to the question is both what we did and what we didn't do. This analysis will look at the change in the three year graduation rates using two variables; the ASAP program and CUNY Start and attempt to determine what parts of the change in graduation rates can be attributed to those programs. The ASAP program is designed to move students quickly through community college and provides students with academic, counseling and financial support. CUNY Start is a pre-college remedial program designed to assist non-ESL students in need of remediation in two areas. The students spend a term (or more) in a specially designed program of remediation. It is a low cost option for remedial students and CUNY Start students are considered non-degree students for enrollment purposes during their time in CUNY Start. After students complete CUNY Start they can enroll in LaGuardia as first-time students. CUNY Start began in 2012.

Methodology

The University provided only the total entering cohort and the three year graduation rate for each year. From those numbers one can easily extrapolate the actual number of graduates. I attempted to duplicate those numbers using the College's census data for Fall 2011 and using the Form A census data from Fall 2012. The College converted from SIMS to CUNY First in Fall 2012 so there was no census table in Fall 2012. The entering cohorts consist of first-time full-time students (12 or more equated credits) who are degree seeking. No certificate students are included. The LaGuardia version of the cohort was then cross referenced against our graduate table to see how many in each cohort graduated within three years. ASAP data was found in both the census and Form A reports and CUNY Start data was derived from student groups and term enrollment files.

1. Cohort Data				
		Students	Grads	Grad %
Fall 2011	LaGuardia	2598	418	16.1%
	CUNY	2598	423	16.3%
Fall 2012	LaGuardia	2639	514	19.5%
	CUNY	2630	525	20.0%

Table 1 shows the comparison between the two sources of entering cohorts. While not an exact match, CUNY has slightly more graduates than we report, it is clearly close enough to continue analyzing the data.

Findings

While CUNY's numbers were aggregated, I was able to identify and separate the ASAP students. Table 1 shows that in Fall 2011 ASAP students represented just 1.7% of the population but graduated at over three and half times the rate of 'other' students. In Fall 2012 the ASAP population grew to over 6.7% of the population and its three year graduation rate was over three times higher. While the dramatic increase in the ASAP population raised the graduation rate for the Fall 2012 cohort overall, the non-ASAP students also graduated at a 1.7% greater rate.

2. 3 Year Graduation Rates Analysis										
Term	Source	1st Time Full-Time			ASAP			Total		
		Students	Grads	Grad %	Students	Grads	Grad %	Students	Grads	Grad %
Fall 2011	LAG Census	2554	393	15.4%	44	25	56.8%	2598	418	16.1%
	CUNY							2598	423	16.3%
Fall 2012	LAG FormA	2461	420	17.1%	178	94	52.8%	2639	514	19.5%
	CUNY							2630	525	20.0%

In Fall 2012, 92 students who would have been part of the entering cohort were diverted to CUNY Start. While CUNY Start students do graduate, their three year graduation rate is much lower than the general student population. Table 3 looks at Fall 2012, but superimposes the ASAP and CUNY Start variables as if it were Fall 2011. The 92 CUNY Start students are added back into the cohort and ASAP enrollment is at the Fall 2011 1.7% rate. This is an attempt 'to make all things equal.' In this scenario the overall three year graduation is 17.5% or 1.4% higher than the Fall 2011 cohort. While not the dramatic 3.7% CUNY showed, it does demonstrate a very positive rise in the graduation rate.

3. Fall 12 Adjusted				
	Students	Grads	Grad %	
1st Time - Full Time	2461	420	17.1%	Original 1st Time Full Time Cohort
ASAP	42	22	52.8%	Adjusted to same proportion as Fall 2011
Cuny Start	92	11	12.0%	Students who weren't there in Fall 2012 but would have been there in Fall 2011.
Total	2595	453	17.5%	Adjusted Fall 12 grad rate still 1.4% better than Fall 2011

Conclusion

While this study does indicate a modest growth in the three year graduation in Fall 2012, it also indicates that using CUNY's aggregate methodology the same results may not be seen when the Fall 2013 analysis is run. Fall 2012 represented a unique situation, a year with major growth in ASAP coupled with a drop in remedial students due to the inception of CUNY Start. In Fall 2013 other CUNY Start completers, who historically have lower than average three year graduation rates, will become part of the entering cohort and the growth in ASAP may not be as dramatic. Table 4, using actual cohort data, projects the three year graduation rate to be 19.1%

4. Fall 2013 3 Year Graduation Projected			
	Students	Grads	Grad %
1st Time - Full Time	2308	394	17.1%
ASAP	144	76	52.8%
Cuny Start	30	4	12.0%
Total	2482	474	19.1%

