

## *Platforms for Mobility*

*Unlocking the Full Potential of New York's Community Colleges*

#communitycollege @nycfuture

Friday, January 10, 2014  
11:30am to 2:00pm

Albany Hilton  
40 Lodge Street  
Albany, NY 12207

New York State's 35 community colleges are increasingly vital to the state's economy and more critical than ever to individuals' economic mobility. But they are often taken for granted by policymakers and face enormous challenges in graduating students. While enrollment growth at the state's community colleges over the past decade has greatly outpaced that of New York's four-year colleges, only 35 percent of full-time students who enroll in the state's community colleges obtain an associate or bachelor's degree within six years.

This symposium in Albany will focus on how New York can harness the full potential of its community colleges and what can be done to ensure that more of those who enroll in the state's community colleges actually graduate. Please join the Center for an Urban Future and the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy at this lunchtime forum, which will discuss specific steps that state policymakers could take to better support New York's community college and strategies that administrators at SUNY and CUNY could adopt to increase completion rates. It will examine what New York might learn from other states, as well as initiatives that CUNY and SUNY have already developed that are worth expanding. The symposium explores the findings of Completion Day and Mobility Makers, the Center's reports on student success in New York State and New York City.

11:30am – 11:45pm: **Registration and Buffet Lunch**

11:45pm – 11:50pm: **Welcoming Remarks**

**Kate Breslin**, President & CEO, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy  
**Jonathan Bowles**, Executive Director, Center for an Urban Future

11:50pm – 12:10pm: **Keynote Presentation**

**Richard Kazis**, Senior Vice President, Jobs for the Future

12:10pm – 1:40pm: **Panel: Unlocking the Full Potential of New York's Community Colleges**

**Moderator: Jonathan Bowles**, Executive Director, Center for an Urban Future

- **Thomas Bailey**, Director, Community College Research Center; Director, National Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment; Teacher's College, Columbia University
- **Johanna Duncan-Poitier**, Senior Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges and the Education Pipeline, State University of New York (SUNY)
- **Anne M. Kress**, President, SUNY Monroe Community College
- **Stanley S. Litow**, Vice President for Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs, IBM; President, IBM International Foundation
- **Félix V. Matos Rodríguez**, President, CUNY Hostos Community College

1:40pm – 1:45pm: **Closing Remarks**

**Deborah Povich**, Working Poor Families Project

*This conference has been generously sponsored by  
Working Poor Families Project and Lumina Foundation*

## *Platforms for Mobility*

### *Unlocking the Full Potential of New York's Community Colleges*

#### **Biographies of Participants**

**Thomas Bailey** is the George and Abby O'Neill Professor of Economics and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. He also serves as the Director of the Community College Research Center (CCRC), which he established at Teachers College in 1996, with support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. In addition to CCRC, he also serves as Director of the National Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment (CAPSEE), housed at and led by CCRC and funded by the Institute of Education Sciences. From 2006 to 2012, Bailey directed the National Center for Postsecondary Research, also funded by the Institute for Education Sciences. In June 2010, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan appointed Bailey chair of the Committee on Measures of Student Success, which developed recommendations for community colleges to comply with completion rate disclosure requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act. Bailey's articles have appeared in a wide variety of education, policy-oriented and academic journals, and he has authored or co-authored eight books. His most recent, co-edited with Vanessa Morest, is *Defending the Community College Equity Agenda* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006). Bailey holds a PhD from MIT with specialties in education, labor economics and econometrics.

**Jonathan Bowles** is Executive Director of the Center for an Urban Future, a Manhattan-based think tank dedicated to independent research about key policy issues facing New York and other cities. He is the architect of the policy agenda for the Center and is responsible for making it one of New York's most innovative and influential organizations and one in which its policy ideas are well-respected and widely used by policymakers, business leaders, and nonprofit practitioners. At the Center, Bowles has authored more than two-dozen reports, including a widely acclaimed 2007 study about the significant impact immigrant entrepreneurs are having on cities' economies, an influential study about New York City's innovation economy and a report about how to retain and grow New York's middle class. He has been asked to be a guest contributor for the *New York Times*, the *New York Daily News* and The Council on Foreign Relations on a range of urban issues. His research about key economic trends facing New York and its five boroughs, the value of small businesses to cities, and the economic impact of industries ranging from air cargo to biotechnology has been covered in publications ranging from the *New York Times* and *USA Today* to *The Economist*. Bowles is a frequent moderator and speaker at conferences and panel discussions on urban policy in New York and nationally.

**Kate Breslin** is President and CEO of the Albany-based Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy. She is chair of the Steering Committee of Medicaid Matters New York, a statewide coalition that advocates for Medicaid beneficiaries, and participates on the Steering Committee of the Health Care for All New York coalition and its Children, Youth and Families Task Force. She serves on the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council and Regional Advisory Committee for the Health Insurance Exchange. She is an active participant in Winning Beginning NY, the State's early childhood coalition. Breslin previously served as the Director of Policy for the Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS), where she directed policy projects and initiatives aiming to strengthen community health centers and improve access to high quality primary care in underserved communities. Breslin served as Project Director for the non-profit California Budget Project, analyzing state budget and tax policies, with a particular focus on health, welfare and the labor market. She directed emergency relief and development programs in West Africa for OXFAM, worked as a consultant in West and Southern Africa and was a Peace Corps volunteer in Sierra Leone. Breslin holds Masters Degrees in both Public Health and Regional Planning from the University of California at Berkeley and a Bachelor of Science from Northwestern University.

**Johanna Duncan-Poitier** is Senior Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges and the Education Pipeline for the State University of New York (SUNY). She provides system oversight and coordination for SUNY's 30 community colleges that educate a quarter of a million students with an annual operating budget of \$1.8 billion. In her dual role, she also provides leadership to strengthen STEM education, teacher preparation and connections between SUNY's 64 campuses and New York State's (NYS) Pre-K-12 schools and business leaders to improve college readiness, completion rates and prepare a highly-qualified workforce. At SUNY, she led the launch and development of a statewide collaborative of cradle-to-career partnerships, the Smart Scholars Early College High Schools, the SUNY Empire State STEM Learning Network and the development of a multi-million dollar consortium of 30 community colleges dedicated to high-demand careers. Duncan-Poitier also serves as one of six NYS Commissioners for the Education Commission of the States (ECS). Duncan-Poitier formerly served as the Senior Deputy Commissioner of Education P-16 for the NYS Education Department; responsible for regulatory oversight of 700 school districts, all NYS public and private colleges and universities and the preparation and licensure of 750,000 licensed professionals in 47 health, business and design professions. In addition, she previously provided campus-based leadership for the City University of New York (CUNY) at Queens College, York College and Bronx Community College. Duncan-Poitier earned a Baccalaureate degree from CUNY Queens College and a Master's degree from CUNY Baruch College.

**Richard Kazis** is Senior Vice President of Jobs for the Future, where he leads JFF's policy and advocacy initiatives. Since joining JFF in the early 1990s, his areas of focus have included: state and institutional strategies for improving outcomes for low-income community college students; policies to promote low-wage worker advancement; state policies to promote college and career readiness for struggling students; the emerging role of labor-market intermediaries in workforce development; and school-to-career models and policy. Kazis' recent publications include: *Stepping up for Community Colleges* (The Boston Foundation, 2013); *Design Principles for a Performance-based Funding System* (JFF, 2012); and *Community College Performance and Regional Recovery: Strategies for State Action* (Brookings Institution, 2011). Kazis has taught at an alternative high school for returning dropouts. He has also helped organize fast-food workers, supervised a Neighborhood Youth Corps program, managed a cooperative urban food production wholesaler, supported labor-environmental jobs coalitions and studied experiential learning for new immigrants in Israel. He chairs the board of the Institute for College Access and Success. Kazis is a graduate of Harvard College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

**Anne M. Kress** is President of SUNY Monroe Community College in Rochester, New York. Her career spans more than 20 years in higher education with special interests in topics relating to student access and success, global education, workforce development, technology, and the intersection between traditional liberal education and essential 21st century learning outcomes. Kress currently serves on New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's Regional Economic Development Council and has been involved in state higher education policy in New York and Florida. Locally, she serves on the boards of the Rochester Business Alliance, Greater Rochester Enterprise, United Way of Greater Rochester and the Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection. She earned a doctorate in higher education administration, master's and bachelor's degrees in English, and a bachelor's degree with honors in finance all from the University of Florida. In 2012, Kress was named an outstanding alumna by the University of Florida's Institute of Higher Education.

**Stanley S. Litow** is President of the IBM Foundation and IBM's Vice President for Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs. Under his leadership, IBM has developed new innovative technologies to help children and adults learn to read and IBM's efforts in education through its Reinventing Education program have raised student achievement and won the company the Ron Brown Award. He was the driving force behind Brooklyn's P-TECH school which is being used as a model by President Obama to encourage dozens more job-oriented STEM education-focused high schools. Three times, he helped lead National Education Summits for the President, the nation's governors and business leaders. He also helped create IBM's Corporate Service Corps, a corporate version of the Peace Corps which deploys 500 of IBM's top emerging leaders in community assignments in the developing world—and the Smarter Cities Challenge, which is helping more than 100 cities worldwide become more competitive. Before joining IBM, Litow served as the Deputy Chancellor of Schools for New York City. He also previously founded and ran Interface, a nonprofit think tank, and served as an aide to both the New York City Mayor and New York State Governor.

**Félix V. Matos Rodríguez** is the President of CUNY Hostos Community College. Trained as a social scientist, Matos Rodríguez previously held leadership positions in foundations, universities, policy centers and branches of government in which he combined his scholarship with social policy, advocacy and change. Prior to this, Matos Rodríguez served as Secretary of the Department of the Family for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. As Secretary, he formulated public policy and administered service delivery in the following programs: Child Support Enforcement, Adoption and Foster Care, Child and Elderly Protection, Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Child Care and Head Start. Earlier, he served as Senior Social Welfare and Health Advisor to the Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Matos Rodríguez is on leave from his tenured position as Professor of Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Studies at CUNY Hunter College where he teaches courses on Caribbean, Latin American, and Latino history. He is a graduate of Yale University, where he graduated *cum laude* in Latin American Studies. He received his Ph.D. in history from Columbia University.

**Deborah Povich** co-manages the Working Poor Families Project (WFPF) on behalf of the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Joyce and Kresge foundations. She joined the project in 2005 as a consultant with Brandon Roberts + Associates. This national initiative supports 23 nonprofit organizations in their efforts to strengthen state policies that benefit low-income working families. Povich provides technical assistance, training, research, analysis, strategic planning and project management for WFPF. Prior to becoming a consultant, Povich worked in the nonprofit, anti-poverty advocacy arena in Maryland for 18 years. She served as executive director of the Job Opportunities Task Force, a workforce development intermediary in Baltimore where she developed and implemented an advocacy agenda that strengthened state investments in adult education and increased access to job training programs for low-skilled workers. She also previously served as Director for Public Policy at the Maryland Center for Community Development and as Executive Director of Common Cause/Maryland. Povich holds a Masters in Public Policy from the University of Maryland, School of Public Affairs.

## *Platforms for Mobility*

### Registered Attendees

- **Eugene Adams**, CUNY Bronx Community College
- **Lindsay Adamski**, New Yorkers For Children
- **Khayriyyah Ali**, SUNY Queens Educational Opportunity Center
- **Kathleen Alioto**, CUNY Guttman Community College
- **Ernie Anderson**, Office of NYS Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk
- **Ana Ariño**, NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC)
- **Desiree Loucks Baer**, New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies (NYSACRA)
- **Thomas Bailey**, Teacher's College, Columbia University
- **Jessica Bakerman**, Capital New York
- **Adam Barth**, Office of NYS Senator Toby Ann Stavisky
- **Katy Belot**, Partnership for New York City
- **Tobi Bickweat**, ACCES-VR
- **Stephen Boese**, Learning Disabilities Association of New York State
- **Jonathan Bowles**, Center for an Urban Future
- **Kate Breslin**, Schuyler Center for Analysis & Advocacy (SCAA)
- **Carol Brusco**, Office of the NYS Comptroller
- **Bruce Carmel**, FECS
- **Sherry Chorost**, Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS)
- **Amy Chou**, New Yorkers For Children
- **Margaret Chretien**, NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services
- **John Colborn**, Aspen Institute
- **Jessica Collier**, New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA)
- **Dave Covey**, Center for Employment Opportunities
- **John D'Agati**, NYS Education Department
- **Amanda Dermady**, Office of NYS Senator Patrick M. Gallivan
- **Dennis DiDonato**, Questar III BOCES
- **MaryLou Dillon**, SUNY Rockland Community College
- **Kelly Dougherty**, NYC Dept. of Small Business Services
- **Ahmad Dowla**, Center for an Urban Future
- **Pat Dowse**, New York State Rehabilitation Association (NYSRA)
- **Johanna Duncan-Poitier**, State University of New York (SUNY)
- **Scott Evenbeck**, CUNY Guttman Community College
- **Sade Elhawary**, NYC Dept. of Education
- **Karin Endy**, Karp Resources
- **Natalie Fabe**, NYC Dept. of Small Business Services
- **Patricia Fahy**, NYS Assemblymember
- **Kathleen Fazio**, NYS Assembly
- **Jenna Flanagan**, WMHT & The Innovation Trail
- **Ann-Margret Foley**, NYS Dept. of Health
- **Daphne Forezzi**, NYS Dept. of Labor
- **Kevin Frazier**, Office of NYS Senator Tim Kennedy
- **John Gamberoni**, Accenture
- **Donna Gurnett**, Association of Proprietary Colleges
- **E. Ronald Guy**, Guy & Associates, Inc.
- **Stan Hansen**, NYS Education Department
- **Tom Hilliard**, Center for an Urban Future
- **Ed Ingoldsby**, Citizens Budget Commission
- **Katherine Jetter**, WMHT
- **Sylvia Jimison**, Literacy New York
- **Crystal Joseph**, CUNY School of Professional Studies/Graduate Center
- **Anthony Joseph**, NYS Dept. of Labor
- **Karen Karp**, Karp Resources
- **Richard Kazis**, Jobs for the Future
- **MaryKaye Kellogg**, CUNY Office of State Relations
- **Imran Khan**, NYS Dept. of Agriculture & Markets

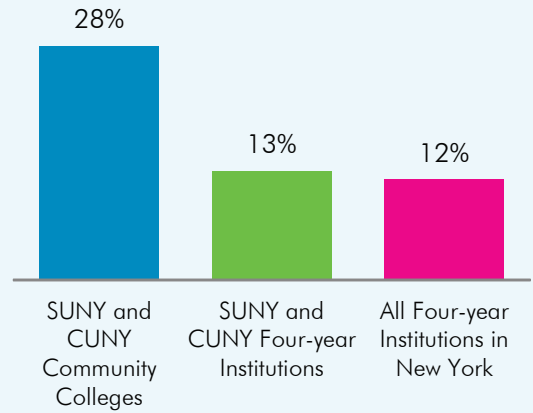
- **Anne M. Kress**, SUNY Monroe Community College
- **Donna Linderman**, City University of New York (CUNY)
- **Stanley S. Litow**, IBM
- **Erin Loffredo**, Questar III BOCES
- **Steve London**, Professional Staff Congress
- **Elizabeth Lynam**, Citizens Budget Commission
- **Melinda Mulawka Mack**, New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP)
- **Franklin Madison**, Gaia
- **Susan Magazine**, New Yorkers For Children
- **Victor Mallison**, Office of NYS Senator George Latimer
- **Peter Mannella**, New York Association for Pupil Transportation (NYAPT)
- **Katie Martinez**, NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC)
- **Félix V. Matos Rodriguez**, CUNY Hostos Community College
- **Denise Murphy McGraw**, SUNY Schenectady County Community College
- **Lisa McKay**, State University of New York (SUNY)
- **Apurva Mehrotra**, Community Service Society
- **Deborah Moeckel**, State University of New York (SUNY)
- **Jorge Montalvo**, NYS Dept. of State
- **Chris Neale**, NYC Dept. of Small Business Services
- **Regis Obijiski**, NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities
- **Maureen O'Connor**, Queens Library
- **Francisco Ordonez**, CUNY Hostos Community College
- **Jose Orengo**, JLO Consultants
- **Jackie Orr**, New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA)
- **David Osorno**, Office of NYS Senator Gustavo Rivera
- **Lauren Pells**, Office of NYS Senator Kathleen Marchione
- **Cordelia Persen**, Center for an Urban Future
- **Kate Pfordresher**, Professional Staff Congress
- **Deborah Povich**, Working Poor Families Project
- **Elizabeth Puleio**, The New School
- **Jay Quaintance**, State University of New York (SUNY)
- **Allison Quigney**, Public Works Partners, LLC
- **Sandra Rivera**, Law Office of Sandra Rivera, PLLC
- **Carol Rodat**, PHI
- **Irma Rodriguez**, Queens Community House
- **Perry Samowitz**, New York State Rehabilitation Association (NYSRA)
- **Sara Schlossberg**, NYC Dept. of Small Business Services
- **Maureen Shields**, CUNY State Relations
- **JoAnn Smith**, Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP
- **Kevin Smith**, NYS Education Department
- **Mary Stalker**, State University of New York (SUNY)
- **Erica Stupp**, NYS Dept. of Health
- **Theresa Swidorski**, Office of Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick
- **Russell Sykes**, Russell Sykes Consulting Services (RSCS)
- **Grazyna Szymanowski**, Schuyler Center for Analysis & Advocacy (SCAA)
- **Lonnie Threatte**, Office of the NYS Governor
- **Bill Trueheart**, Achieving the Dream, Inc.
- **Amy Tucker**, SUNY Fulton Montgomery Community College
- **John Twomey**, John A Twomey and Associates
- **Lisa Wager**, SUNY Fashion Institute of Technology
- **Ronalyn Wilson**, SUNY Fulton Montgomery Community College
- **Teresita Wisell**, SUNY Westchester Community College
- **Lucinda Zoe**, City University of New York (CUNY)
- **Scott Zucker**, Public Works Partners, LLC

## Completion Day

Community Colleges are a critical resource for a growing number of New Yorkers and key component of the state's economic competitiveness. But they are taken for granted by policymakers and continue to face enormous challenges in graduating students.

Funded by the  
Working Poor Families Project

### Enrollment Growth at New York Colleges and Universities



### 6-year Community College Graduation Rate

**35%**

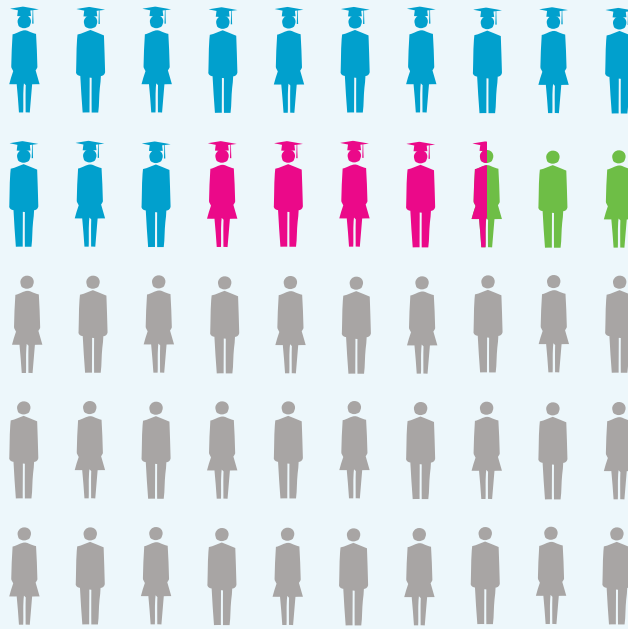
NYS Community Colleges

**37%**

SUNY Community Colleges

**29%**

CUNY Community Colleges



**26%**

graduated with an Associate Degree

**9%**

graduated with a Bachelor's Degree

**5%**

were still enrolled

**60%**

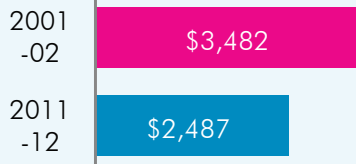
dropped out or transferred and could not be tracked

Increasing the NYS community college graduation rate by 10% would provide a

**+\$150M**

1 year boost to the state economy

29% Decrease in Per-Student State Operating Aid for NYS Community Colleges



Percentage of Community College students requiring remedial work

**50%** | **79%**

of students statewide

of students in New York City

Full-time workers with only a high school diploma could increase their annual median salary by

**+\$3,540**

if they attend college but don't get a degree

**+\$6,100**

if they earn an Associate Degree

**+\$24,600**

if they earn a Bachelor's Degree

## 6-year Graduation Rates for New York State's 35 Community Colleges

College	Cohort Entered Fall 2002	All Degrees	Associate Degrees	Bachelor's Degree
<b>Community Colleges</b>	<b>42,045</b>	<b>14,902</b>	<b>10,990</b>	<b>3,912</b>
Jefferson (SUNY)	592	46%	29%	17%
Niagara County (SUNY)	913	45%	33%	13%
Finger Lakes (SUNY)	790	44%	34%	10%
Jamestown (SUNY)	779	44%	29%	15%
Cayuga County (SUNY)	536	43%	34%	10%
Columbia-Greene (SUNY)	215	43%	34%	8%
Broome (SUNY)	1,330	42%	25%	17%
Fulton-Montgomery (SUNY)	427	42%	30%	13%
Monroe (SUNY)	2,733	42%	31%	11%
North Country (SUNY)	272	41%	32%	9%
Herkimer County (SUNY)	819	40%	30%	10%
Adirondack (SUNY)	662	39%	28%	11%
Clinton (SUNY)	336	39%	26%	12%
Hudson Valley (SUNY)	2,364	39%	29%	10%
Kingsborough (CUNY)	1,776	39%	28%	10%
Erie (SUNY)	2,140	38%	27%	11%
Mohawk Valley (SUNY)	1,320	37%	25%	13%
Nassau (SUNY)	4,042	37%	30%	7%
Dutchess (SUNY)	940	36%	26%	10%
Genesee (SUNY)	595	36%	25%	10%
Corning (SUNY)	645	35%	29%	7%
Tompkins Cortland (SUNY)	584	35%	24%	11%
Onondaga (SUNY)	963	34%	24%	11%
Rockland (SUNY)	1,069	34%	25%	9%
Schenectady County (SUNY)	403	34%	29%	5%
Suffolk County (SUNY)	3,385	34%	27%	6%
Ulster County (SUNY)	443	33%	21%	12%
Queensborough (CUNY)	1,833	30%	19%	11%
LaGuardia (CUNY)	1,902	29%	21%	8%
Orange County (SUNY)	995	28%	21%	7%
Borough of Manhattan (CUNY)	2,775	27%	20%	7%
Westchester (SUNY)	1,493	27%	22%	4%
Bronx (CUNY)	976	24%	18%	5%
Sullivan County (SUNY)	428	23%	18%	6%
Hostos (CUNY)	570	21%	18%	3%
<b>All Community Colleges</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>9%</b>

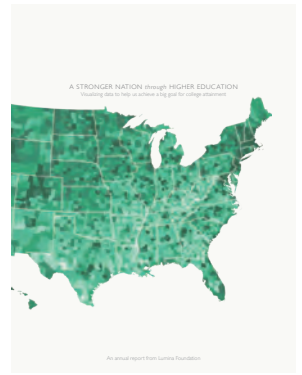
Source: SUNY Office of Institutional Research and Analysis, CUNY Office of Institutional Research. The table tracks the outcomes of students who enrolled in 2002 through 2008.



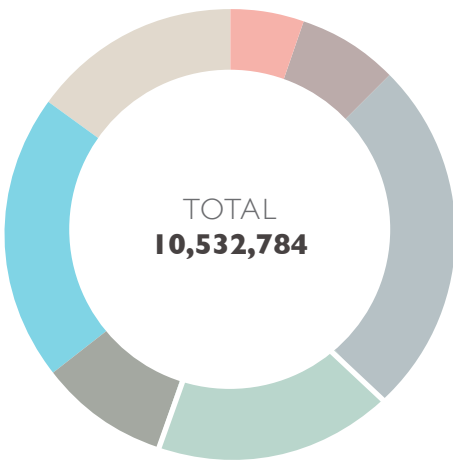
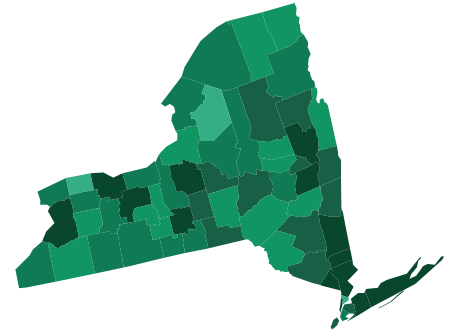
DATA FROM

# A STRONGER NATION *through* HIGHER EDUCATION, 2013

An annual report from Lumina Foundation



## New York



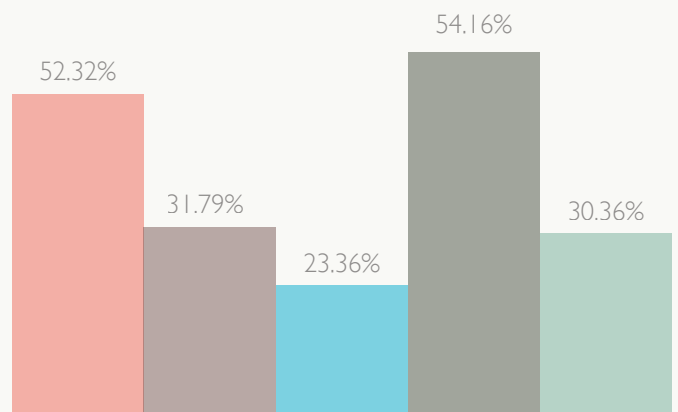
### Levels of education for New York adults (ages 25-64)

Less than ninth grade	558,308	<b>5.30%</b>
Ninth to 12th grade, no diploma	779,835	<b>7.40%</b>
High school graduate (including equivalency)	2,706,364	<b>25.69%</b>
Some college, no degree	1,792,905	<b>17.02%</b>
Associate degree	969,790	<b>9.21%</b>
Bachelor's degree	2,168,317	<b>20.59%</b>
Graduate or professional degree	1,557,265	<b>14.78%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey

### Degree-attainment rates among New York adults (ages 25-64), by population group

White	<b>52.32%</b>
Black	<b>31.79%</b>
Hispanic	<b>23.36%</b>
Asian	<b>54.16%</b>
Native American	<b>30.36%</b>



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-11 American Community Survey PUMS File



## OP-ED: NEW YORK WOULD BENEFIT BY RAISING GRADUATION RATES

In June 2013, The Buffalo News published an op-ed by our senior fellow Tom Hilliard about the need to increase community college graduation rates in New York.

by Tom Hilliard

# THE BUFFALO NEWS

My organization, the Center for an Urban Future, just published [a study about New York's community colleges](#). We were impressed by employers singing the praises of local community colleges, surprised at how many jobs now require a two-year degree and struck by how important these institutions have become to economic mobility.

But of the roughly 42,000 full-time students who entered community colleges in 2002, fewer than 15,000 (35 percent) had obtained a degree six years later. The community colleges in Western New York – including Jamestown (a 44 percent six-year graduation), Monroe (42 percent), Erie (38 percent) and Genesee (36 percent) – all posted slightly higher rates than the state average, but every community college had a six-year graduation rate below 50 percent.

Raising the community college graduation rate by as little as 10 percent would yield tremendous benefits: \$42 million in direct earnings each year, \$62 million in economic activity as graduates spend their higher salaries in their communities and \$60 million in public funding going toward college graduates instead of dropouts.

There are understandable reasons why so few students graduate. Community colleges serve a large number of students with inadequate skills in math, reading, writing and computer proficiency. They serve immigrants who speak limited English, young people who are the first in their family to go to college and laid-off workers terrified at having to sit in a classroom after 30 years on a production line.

But every student who walks into a community college classroom has a chance to graduate with marketable credentials, and there are things colleges can do to help more reach that milestone. At City University of New York, for example, a program called ASAP more than doubles the rate at which students obtain associate degrees in three years. Another program, CUNY Start, dramatically reduces the developmental education needs of entering freshmen.

Community college administrators in New York should experiment more with models like these and make student success a higher priority. Meanwhile, state and local policymakers should support working learners by expanding financial aid for adult and part-time students, fund pilot programs to explore innovative strategies and build the evidence base for more effective student success reform, and make community college graduation rates public information so that institutions will be more accountable.

Between 2001 and 2011, per-student state funding for community colleges dropped by 29 percent after adjusting for inflation. State officials should reverse this trend to help New York build a workforce equipped for the 21st century.

*This op-ed was originally published in the June 30, 2013 edition of [The Buffalo News](#). Thomas Hilliard is senior fellow in workforce development policy at the Center for an Urban Future, a New York City-based policy institute.*

**As New York State transitions from a manufacturing economy** to a knowledge economy, few institutions are playing a more important role than the state's 35 community colleges.

With more than 328,000 students enrolled statewide, community colleges are boosting New York's economic competitiveness by upgrading the skills of a large chunk of the state's workforce.<sup>1</sup> They are enabling displaced workers to acquire skills in occupations that are growing, and helping businesses across the state meet their evolving workforce needs—from photonics in Rochester to nanotech in Albany. Perhaps most importantly, community colleges have become the state's key opportunity institutions. At a time when a high school diploma is no longer sufficient to obtain a decent paying job in most industries but the cost of getting a college education has skyrocketed, the state's community colleges offer the most accessible path for tens of thousands of low- and moderate-income New Yorkers to obtain a post-secondary credential.

Due in large part to their importance as vocational resources in a quickly changing economy, student enrollment has been growing faster at two-year institutions than at four-year institutions in New York. Over the last decade, enrollment at State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) community colleges increased by 28 percent, compared to 13 percent at SUNY and CUNY four-year institutions and 12 percent at all four-year colleges and universities in the state.

However, the state's community colleges have only just begun to deliver on their potential and face enormous challenges in the years ahead. Far too few students who enroll at community colleges in New York end up graduating or moving on to a four-year institution. Statewide, only 35 percent of full-time students who enroll in community college courses obtain an associate or bachelor's degree after six years. And in New York City, where a much higher percentage of students qualify as low-income, the six-year graduation rate is just 29 percent. While some schools do better than others at graduating students, every community college in the state has a six-year graduation rate below 50 percent.

Community college students fail to graduate for a number of reasons. Although more New Yorkers are choosing to enroll in community colleges, many are unprepared for college level work. Fifty percent of students across the state—and 79 percent in New York City—need remedial work before they can begin on a more specialized career track. Moreover, even as enrollment has increased, state funding has declined by 29 percent over the last decade, leading to higher tuition costs and a larger financial burden for many students of moderate means.

Raising community college graduation rates will be an enormous challenge for both academic leaders and state policymakers, but doing so is clearly worth the investment. As we demonstrate in this report, higher graduation rates would not only provide growing industries with the workers they need to remain competitive, it would dramatically increase the earning potential of thousands of New Yorkers, leading to both increased regional GDP and government revenue. We estimate that increasing graduation rates by just 10 percentage points would provide a \$150 million one-year boost to the state economy; a \$41 million increase in the annual incomes of those who graduate; a \$32 million increase in economic activity as those higher earning graduates spend more on goods and services; and \$44 million in taxpayer investments going toward graduates rather than dropouts.

Over the next decade, the combined value of raising community college graduation rates from 35 percent to 45 percent would be \$1.5 billion, over two decades \$3 billion, and over three decades \$4.5 billion.



This report details the increasing importance of community colleges to New York State's economy and documents why raising graduation rates at the state's community colleges by even a small amount would result in significant benefits to the state's employers, young adults and the working poor. A follow-up to our 2011 *Mobility Makers* study, which focused on the importance of improving the graduation rate at the six community colleges in New York City, this report details graduation rates for all 35 community colleges statewide and focuses mainly on SUNY community colleges across the state. Funded by the Working Poor Families Project—a national initiative supported by the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Joyce and Kresge Foundations, which partners with nonprofit organizations to strengthen economic conditions and state policies affecting working families—the report is based on extensive data analysis and more than two dozen interviews with community college leaders, education experts and employers from nearly every region around the state.

Low graduation rates have been a chronic affliction of community colleges in New York and nationwide, stemming in part from their open access mission to accept all students regardless of test scores or high school GPA. But as the economy continues to put a premium on postsecondary credentials, even for traditionally low-tier positions, the lack of progress in raising those rates is posing larger and larger problems. The jobs that community college graduates fill are not only projected to grow significantly in the coming decade; they are in industries that are pivotal to the state's economic future, including advanced manufacturing, technology, health care, and high-end services such as finance and law.

Many of the employment experts we spoke to during our research for this report told us that postsecondary credentials are becoming increasingly important for the vast majority of middle skill jobs. "The number of our employees who have at least an associate's degree has grown over the past decade" says Chris Sansone, the production manager at the Keller Technology Corporation, a high-tech manufacturer in Buffalo. "Depending

on the job, I expect there will be a two-year degree minimum in the next five years or so."

Employers also value occupational certificates and industry certifications which respond directly to employer demand. Erie Community College in Buffalo developed a one-year certification program in Computer Numeric Control (CNC) to support employer needs in the region's growing advanced manufacturing sector. According to Sansone, all of Keller Technology's precision machinists are now required to go through the program.

"The jobs filled by community college students are very important [for our local economy]," says Mark Peterson, president and CEO of Greater Rochester Enterprise, a business group. "At least 50 percent of the new jobs in Rochester will require some type of degree beyond high school."

Community colleges prepare residents for higher skilled jobs in the knowledge economy in a variety of ways. They offer two-year degrees and certificates in specific career skills, ranging from nursing to welding; serve as a workforce development resource by providing customized training courses for local industry; offer a low-cost starting point for people who plan to move on to a four-year college; and offer programs in high school equivalency, adult literacy and English as a second language. Community colleges are critical for working adults who need to upgrade or retool their skills. The rapid spread of technology and outsourcing has resulted in the dislocation of millions of adults across the state, and community colleges train these dislocated adults for new occupations in growing industries.

More than any other educational provider, community colleges serve the needs of their regional economies and have proven themselves adept at responding to changing economic conditions with new professional degree and certification programs. For example, Monroe Community College is the only two-year institution in the nation that offers a degree in optical systems technology and regularly places its graduates at local firms, including Xerox, Bausch and Lomb, Corning and Kodak. More recently, Hudson Valley Community College in Troy built a high-tech

outpost near the new GlobalFoundries semiconductor plant in order to prepare students for the anticipated 1,400 new jobs there.

Outside of New York City, where it is harder to attract talent from other regions of the country or globe, preparing local residents for higher-skilled jobs in local industries could mean the difference between economic revival and continued decline. Businesses need to have a competitive workforce if they are going to be competitive themselves, and economic research has shown that more education can lead to an exponential rise in productivity, since the person who has acquired the extra learning and skills is not the only one who benefits—their co-workers and collaborators do as well.<sup>2</sup>

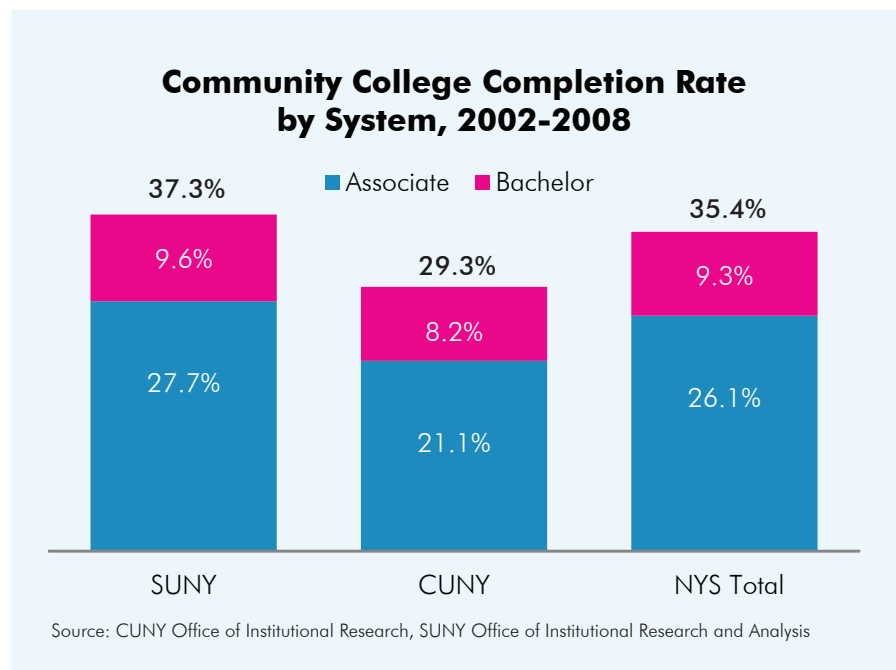
“If you look at the numbers,” says Randall Wolken, president of The Manufacturers Association of Central New York (MACNY), “people just do better when they have been certified in skills, and employers feel more comfortable hiring them, even if it is at the basic skill level and they have to stack on additional skills.”

Their increase in earning power is also significant. According to the New York State Department of Labor, an individual who earns an associate degree will make an average of 18 percent more per year than someone with a high school diploma. Moreover, a significant number of community college students go on to earn a bachelor’s degree, and these individuals earn an average of 73 percent more than those with a high school diploma.<sup>3</sup> Full-time workers with only a high school diploma could increase their median salary by \$3,540 annually if they attend college but don’t earn a degree and by \$6,100 annually if they earn an associate degree. An adult who attends college but does not complete is therefore giving up nearly \$3,000 a year in additional income. These figures are actually significantly un-

derstated since they don’t take into account pay raise patterns or other incidental benefits such as increased job satisfaction and improved health.

CUNY and SUNY community colleges are already meeting many local employment needs, but with hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers in low-wage jobs, at the same time that many employers are complaining about their inability to find suitably skilled job applicants, the need to graduate more community college students is obvious. Our analysis finds that of the 42,000 students who enrolled at community colleges statewide in 2002, only 15,000 graduated six years later with a degree, 26 percent with an associate degree and 9 percent with a bachelor’s degree. Five percent were still enrolled, and the other 60 percent had either dropped out or transferred out of the system where their outcomes could not be tracked.

Outcomes at SUNY community colleges were substantially better than at CUNY. The average graduation rate at SUNY institutions was 37 percent, compared to 29 percent at CUNY. The two systems were fairly similar in connecting students to four-year colleges where they could earn bachelor’s degrees, but SUNY was about 30 percent more effective in graduating students with associate degrees.





**Table 1: Community Colleges with the Highest and Lowest Graduation Rates**

	Avg Grad Rate	Avg Pop	Avg Low-Income	Avg Minority	Avg Remedial	Avg Adult
Top 5 schools by graduation rate	45%	722	38%	19%	52%	33%
Bottom 5 schools by graduation rate	24%	1,248	54%	80%	65%	39%

Source: CUNY Office of Institutional Research, SUNY Office of Institutional Research and Analysis, New York State Education Department Office of Research and Information Systems, IPEDS

Individually, the top and bottom performing schools seemed to diverge in a number of important ways. The top five community colleges in the cohort—Jefferson, Niagara County, Finger Lakes, Jamestown and Cayuga—had an average graduation rate of 45 percent, while the bottom five—Borough of Manhattan, Westchester, Bronx, Sullivan and Hostos—had an average rate of just 24 percent. As Table 1 shows, the top performing schools had smaller student bodies on average and were all located in upstate regions, while the bottom performing schools were larger and were all located in downstate areas. To a striking degree, demographics and income level were both strong predictors of graduation success. The 2002 cohort at the top five schools consisted of 38 percent low-income students and 19 percent minority students. The bottom five schools had 54 percent low-income students and 80 percent minority students.

Statewide, the student bodies of the top performing schools tended to be overwhelmingly white, reflecting the demographics of their communities, and better off economically than those in lower-performing schools (though the vast majority of students even at these schools come from moderate income families). For example, the top five schools all had fewer than 30 percent minority students while the bottom five schools all had more than 50 percent. Out of 20 schools with above average graduation rates, none had a student body with more than a third minority students, and only five out of 20 had low-income student populations that were even close to 50 percent, namely Jamestown, Fulton-Montgomery,

Herkimer, Mohawk Valley and Tompkins Cortland.

Colleges with low graduation rates were more likely to have a large share of entering freshmen placed into remedial courses. Interestingly, however, the reverse is not necessarily true: colleges with high graduation rates had an average share of remedial students, not a low share. In addition, colleges with higher graduation rates had a smaller share of adult students (defined here as ages 25-49), who are more likely to have work and family obligations than recent high school graduates.

Nationally, several other large states do a much better job of moving community college students toward graduation than New York. According to Complete College America, 39 percent of students at community colleges in New York either graduate with an associate degree or transfer to a four-year institution for a bachelor’s within three years of matriculating, compared to 52 percent of students in Florida, 50 percent in Wisconsin, and 48 percent in Illinois. Washington and Minnesota also do much better by this metric.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the economic costs, high dropout rates exact a large toll on the public purse. Considering both operating aid and student tuition assistance, we estimate that each community college dropout in New York costs the municipal, state and federal governments over \$10,400. Overall, the dropouts in the 2002 cohort cost \$260 million in taxpayer subsidies.

Thus, increasing the number of community college graduates even by just a little bit would provide significant material benefits to employers, individuals, local economies, and taxpayers.

**Increasing the NYS community college graduation rate by 10% would provide**

**+\$150M**

**annual boost to the state economy**

**+\$41M**

**increase in the annual incomes of those who graduate**

**+\$32M**

**increase in economic activity**

**+\$44M**

**in taxpayer investments going toward graduates rather than dropouts**

On the basis of the 2002 cohort, we calculate that the value of increasing graduation rates in New York State from 35 to 45 percent would result in:

- \$29 million more in increased annual earnings.
- \$23 million more in economic activity.
- \$6 million more in federal and state income tax receipts.
- \$44 million in tax payer contributions in the form of base operating aid, Pell and TAP Grants going towards community college graduates rather than dropouts.
- 4,205 more skilled and educated employees with credentials to fill local employer needs.

However, while the need to increase graduation rates at community colleges across the state is clear, there is no silver bullet. The causes of dropout are diverse, and strategies to keep students on track to graduation must not come at the cost of weakening academic rigor or compromising the open access mission. In addition, strategies to address student dropout must accommodate the autonomy of community colleges in the SUNY system. Unlike CUNY, SUNY's twenty-nine community colleges are self-governed, and their presidents are appointed by local boards. SUNY is trying to create a more cohesive system for all of its institutions, but institutional autonomy will continue to be highly valued and defended.

Despite the diversity, community colleges across the state also face common drivers for dropout, even in very different communities. The lack of basic literacy and numeracy and preparation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) disciplines among entering students are

major concerns across the state, but so are rising tuition costs and social issues. Many community college students are the first members of their family to attend college and are easily confused by its unfamiliar culture. Others struggle to balance the demands of work and family with their classes and study, and many older students need to brush up on subjects that have gathered dust since high school graduation.

Boosting student success at New York's community colleges will not be simple or easy. But it can be done. We know this because it is happening in other states. Crucially, however, change will require New York State government to take ownership of the issue. The first step New York State needs to take is simply to acknowledge the problem, and forthrightly commit to solving it. The Governor, Legislature, and Board of Regents should publicly identify community college completion as a top state priority. This will send the message to agency managers, employers and leaders at SUNY and CUNY that they should step forward and take action.

Next, Governor Cuomo and the Board of Regents should develop institutional capacity to assist community colleges in boosting success in every phase of their students' college experience: from pre-collegiate preparation to graduation and first employment. New York benefits from having public institutions that are accountable to their local elected officials. But those institutions need to be accountable as well to the expressed priorities of state leaders.

Finally, New York needs to build new capacity for raising community college completion rates. It can accomplish this in several ways:

- A competitive grant program for community colleges to try evidence-based innovations around student success, learning from established programs like Achieving the Dream and Pathways to Completion;

- A web-based student success dashboard similar to that recently launched by the California Community Colleges system, which provides not only overall completion rates, but also completion rates for low-income, remedial, older and minority students;

- A Student Success Center, similar to foundation-funded institutes in Michigan and Arkansas, that builds the evidence base on what completion strategies work, disseminates that evidence to policymakers and frontline providers, and convenes faculty and administrators for professional development around student success, open access and academic rigor.

- Expansion of the Tuition Assistance Program to support low-income students who are now partially or fully excluded, including DREAMers, part-time students, foster youth and single adults.

Without a doubt, policymakers are starting to understand the important role that community colleges play across the state, and the economic toll of low-graduation rates has been specifically acknowledged by Governor Cuomo and other political leaders. In the 2013-14 budget, the Governor and Legislature agreed to create the Next Generation Job Linkage Program Incentive Fund, which will disburse \$5 million to community colleges “based on measures of student success.” Earlier this year, Governor Cuomo also announced a plan to establish 10 new schools around the state modeled on Brooklyn’s Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH), an innovative partnership with IBM where students stay for six years and leave with an associate degree and hands-on experience in the working world.

Still, far too little has been done to tackle this enormous problem. Remarkably, while enrollment has climbed dramatically over the last decade, state funding has actually dropped. From the 2001-02 academic year to the 2011-12 academic year, state funding per student, in inflation-adjusted terms, dropped by 29 percent. Community colleges were forced to raise tuition by almost \$1,500, a burden for which modest increases in need-based financial aid only partially compensated. The end result is a poorer community college system in which the largest funder is no longer the state, but the students themselves.

This is an enormous lost opportunity for New York. The future of the state’s economy rests on its skilled workforce, and that workforce is now being forged in the state’s 35 community colleges.

*This is an excerpt. To read the full report, visit [www.nycfuture.org](http://www.nycfuture.org).*

