Enrollment Management and Strategic Academic Initiatives

Retention, Momentum, & Graduation

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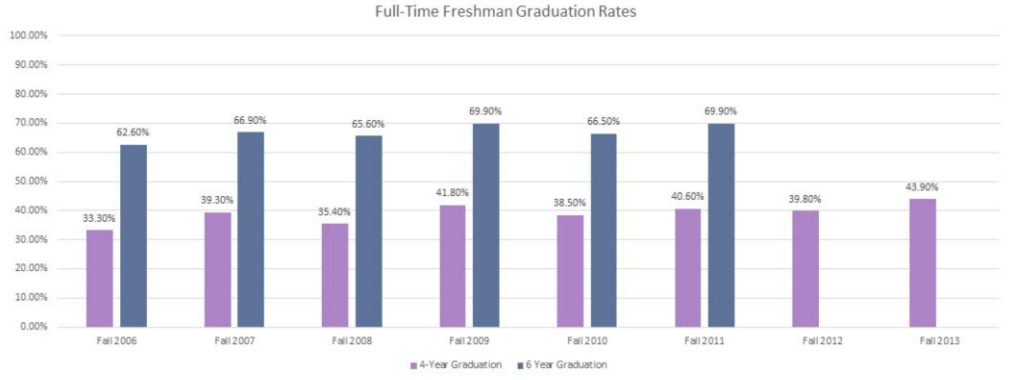
Full-Time Freshman Graduation Rates



Graduation rates over the last eight years. While there's some fluctuation, we are on a generally gentle upward slope. To give you some context for our now 70% six-year graduation rate, the national average is 56.9% If we look back at our own history, to the class that entered twenty years ago, in the fall of 1998, the six year graduation rate for that entering cohort was only 53%. We are about 18 points ahead of the CUNY senior college average, and about 10 points ahead of the next closest CUNY college. For a public, urban, commuter school with a relatively high proportion of lower income students, our success rate is actually quite extraordinary, and we have a lot to be proud of.

That said, fewer than half of our students who enter as freshmen complete their four-year degree in four years, and we believe we can do better on that front, and I'll circle back to that in a few minutes.

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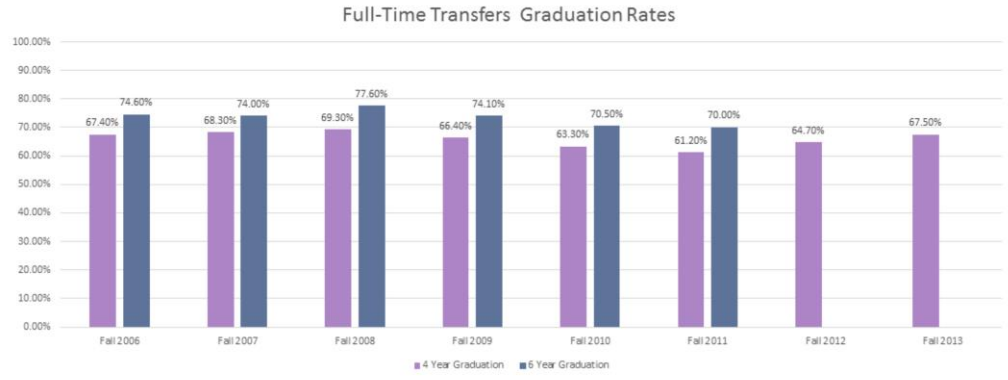
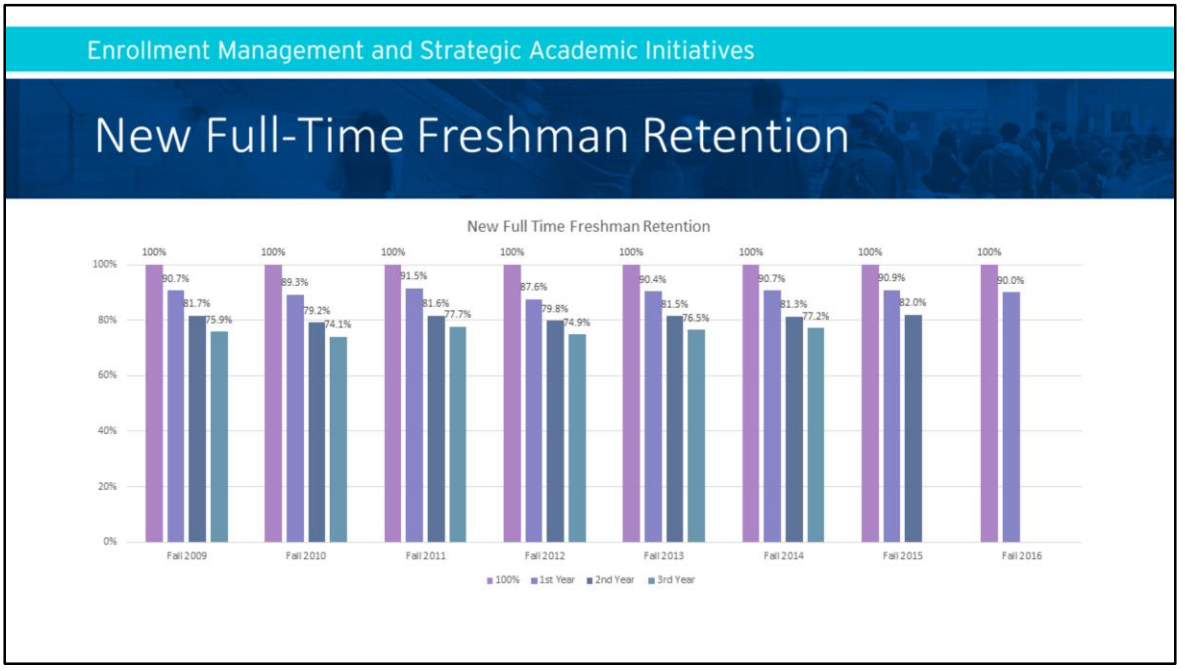
Full-Time Transfers Graduation Rates



Here we have the graduation rates for our transfer students, again reported on a four and six year scale. There's a bit off oddness attached to this methodology, as it's four and six years out from whenever they began with us – whether they transferred in with 12 credits or 90 – but that's how the official IPEDS report is configured, so it's how we measure.

As you can see, our six year grad rate for transfer students has been consistently above 70%, though the last few three years have seen a decline, and for the first time this year (for the 2011 cohort), our freshman and transfer rates essentially met at 70%. The good news is that when we look at the four-year rates for the next two cohorts, you can see that transfer success rates seem to be recovering.



I'm going to switch back now to talk about the freshman rates, because those are the students on whom we are most often called upon to report out publicly.

So, understand a little better the context of how we arrive at these graduation rates, it's important to look at what happens in the pipeline towards commencement. While there's a little fluctuation, it is roughly correct to say that we lose about 10% of our students at some point between the start of their freshman year and the start of their sophomore year.

Again, for historical context, that 1998 cohort I mentioned a little while ago had a one-year retention rate of only 81.6

Here we see the two year retention rate -- and again, we lose close to another 10% of the class. So by the start of junior year, we've lost approximately a fifth of the class

As you can see, by the start of senior year, attrition slows down tremendously and we begin to head into a place where the vast majority of students are likely to graduate

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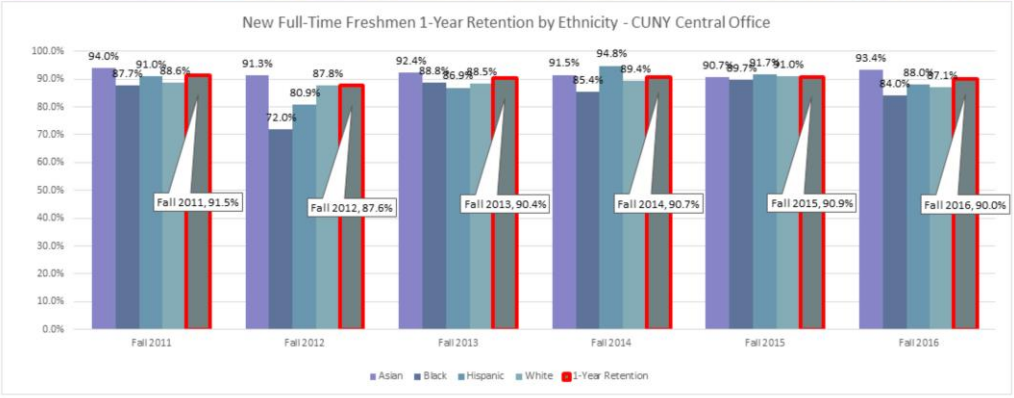
New Full Time Freshman 1-Year Retention by Ethnicity



From an equity and social justice perspective, one of the data sets we are looking very closely at, and which I know is of interest to many of you, is how well we are retaining and graduating underrepresented students. Here the news is frankly cause for some concern.

This chart takes a look at first-year retention rates for students broken down by ethnicity. The far right column on each cohort, outlined in red, represents the overall retention rate for that particular class. Starting at the left, the bars represent Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students. We've left the data for students identifying as Native American out, simply because the n is so small as to make the percentages fairly meaningless.

As you can see, Asian students are consistently at or above the overall average. Black student retention is consistently below the cohort average, sometimes by a slim margin and sometimes by a quite alarmingly large margin. Hispanic students also tend to retain at slightly below average rates, though not always (note the very strong showing for the Fall 2014 cohort).

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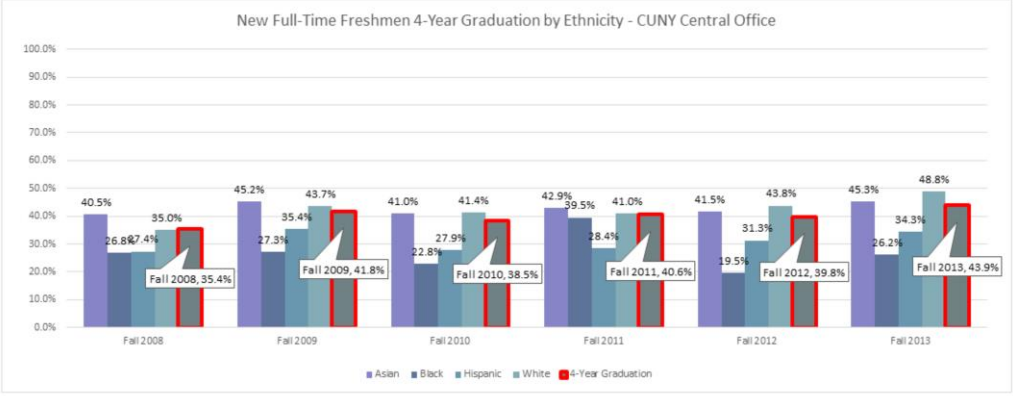
New Full-Time Freshman 4-Year Graduation by Ethnicity



Here now is the data on students graduating within four years. Here is where it really becomes apparent that we are not doing as well by our students of color as we need to be. Again, the far right column is the overall rate. And left to right we see Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White student 4-year graduation rates. Those center two columns – representing our URM students - are noticeably below those representing our Asian and White students.

So, what we know is that underrepresented students are less likely to be retained after their first year, they are less likely to earn 30 credits in their first year (no chart), and they are significantly less likely to finish their degree in four years.

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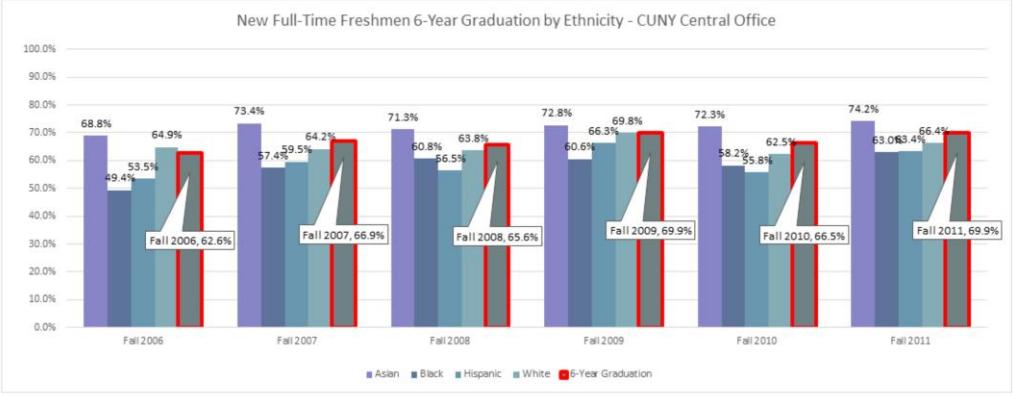
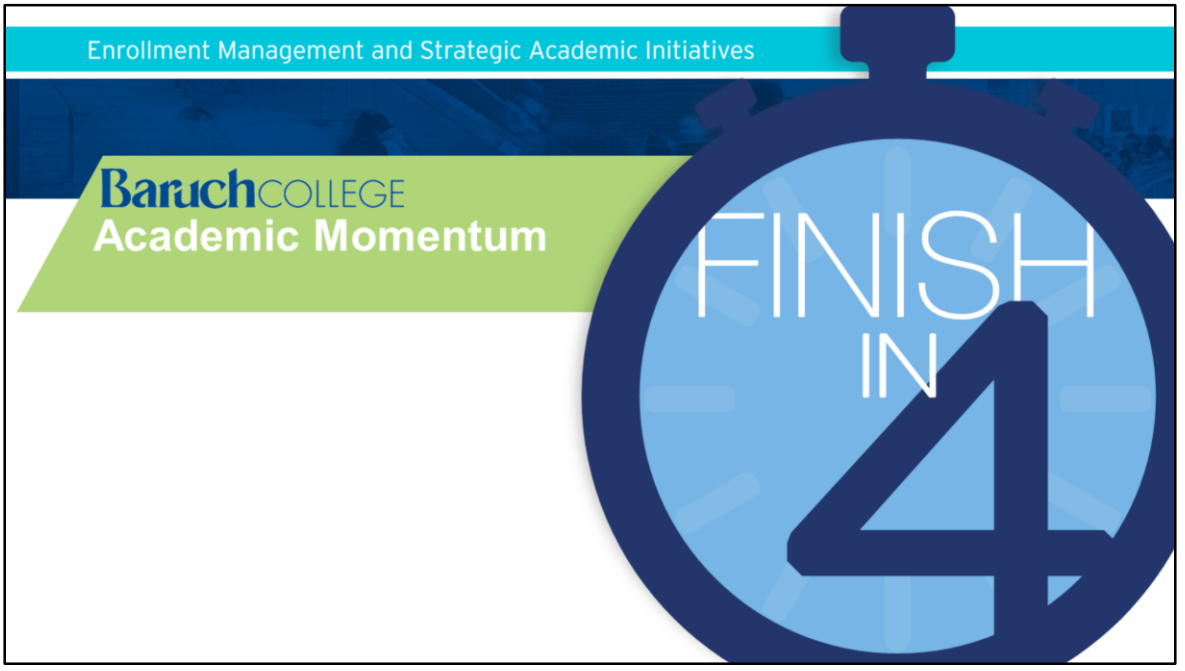
New Full-Time Freshman 6-Year Graduation by Ethnicity



And as you can see, that pattern continues when we look at our six year graduation patterns as well.

So, now that we've looked at the data, I want to turn briefly to talk about some of the efforts we are undertaking to help students move more efficiently and effectively towards earning their degree.



I hope that earlier this week all of you received my message providing you with some information and resources around our Finish in 4 efforts. I want to give you a little background information on where this initiative is coming from.

Largely in response to the aspirational goal set by the president of raising our six year graduation rate to 75%, and following the organizational structure of “cross border teams” that grew out of our last strategic planning cycle, a team devoted to undergraduate retention and student success has been meeting for about two and a half years now. I convene the group, and it includes representatives from across enrollment management, academic affairs, student affairs, and each of the three schools.

A number of exciting initiatives have come out of that group that I'd like to share with you, as well as how they dovetail nicely with the University's new Academic Momentum push you may have heard about, and finally we'll get to how you can help.

First let's start with our Communication Plan:
In early Spring 2017, in advance of summer and fall registration, we began sending multiple targeted emails to students who were not on track to complete 30 credits in the year, either because they registered for too few, withdrew, or failed something in the fall. We encouraged staying on track toward four-year graduation and encouraged summer registration. We followed up throughout spring semester, contacting anyone who fell below 15 credits by withdrawing.

When some details were announced about the Excelsior scholarship in late spring, we renewed our efforts with additional campus-wide communications, emphasizing the necessity to make timely progress in order to be eligible.

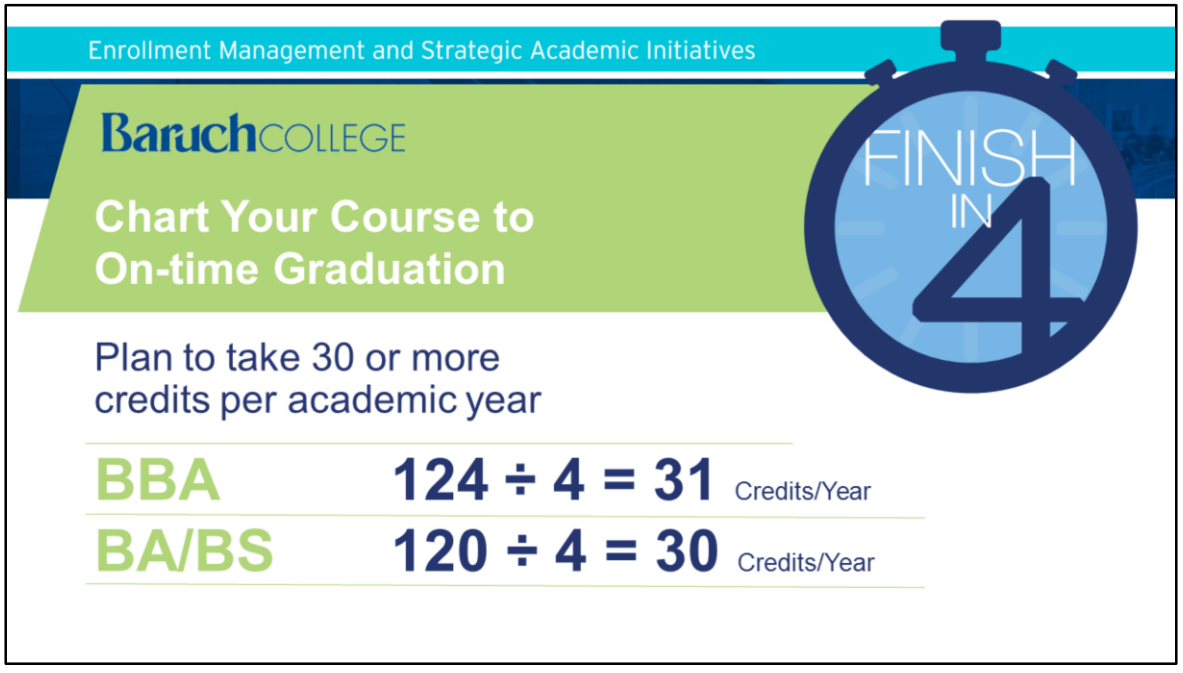
Over the summer, Enrollment Management worked with the Office of Communications and Marketing to create an integrated marketing and communications campaign

around “Finish in 4,” and we unrolled it for this term’s registration season which began in October.

Samples to follow

Undergraduate students all received a “Finish in 4” email touting the benefits of completing their degree in four years

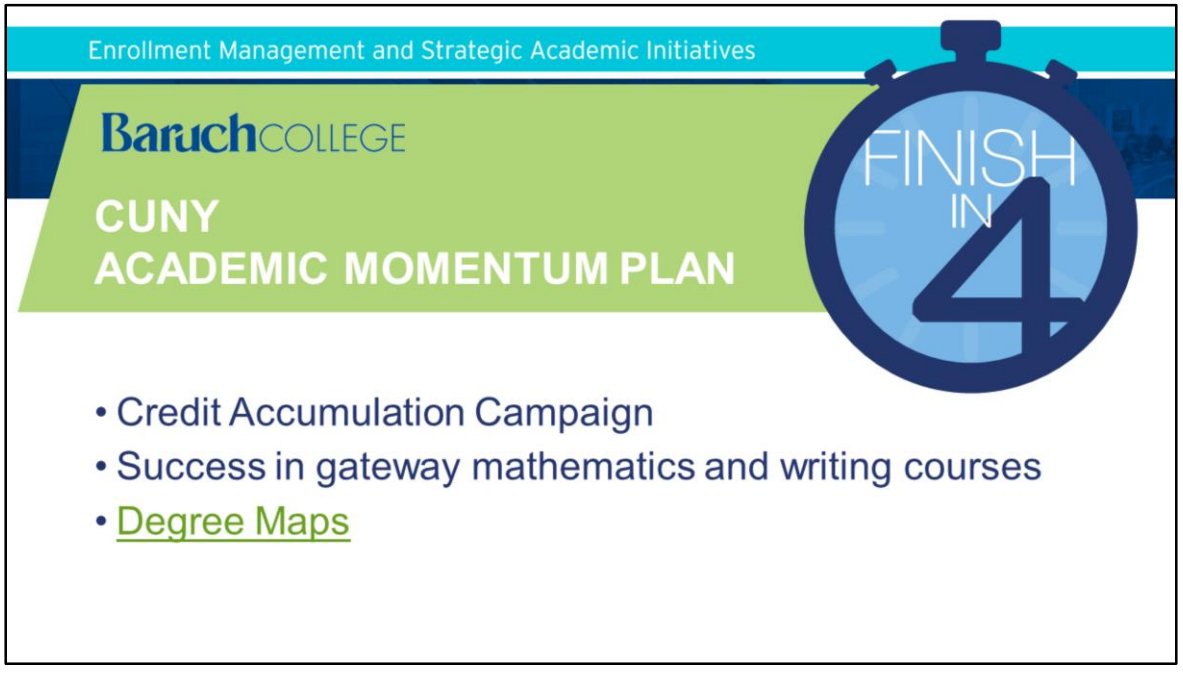
A “Finish in 4” website was created at http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/undergraduate-advisement-and-orientation/finish-in-four.html



Campus monitor screens began running “Finish in 4” public service announcements like this one and others

Customized templates with the “Finish in 4” logo were created and can be used in a variety of ways, including in our presentations on curriculum at orientation; on emails aimed at students who are behind; in our winter intersession marketing;

You may have noticed it this week on the slider on the college’s homepage



Concurrent with all of this activity coming out of our local retention and student success group, CUNY in mid-fall announced a university-wide "Academic Momentum" push, designed to encourage students to make timely progress toward degree completion in two years (at associates level) and four years at the senior colleges. Each campus was asked to pull together a team to address this challenge (ours already existed), and we were required to submit a preliminary plan on how we were going to increase credit accumulation, give students clear navigational tools to major completion, and increase success rates in gateway math and writing courses. We submitted our preliminary plan, based on the work we'd been doing, in mid-December.

In January, CUNY convened an Academic Momentum Planning Summit, led by a national non-profit organization called Complete College America, and drawing on experienced content area experts from around the country. A subset of the Retention & Student Success team comprised of myself, Dennis Slavin, Sharon Ricks (Undergrad Advisement & Orientation), Lisa Blankenship (English/writing program), Michele Doney (SACC), and Rob Kunicki (retention and assessment in EMSAI) participated.

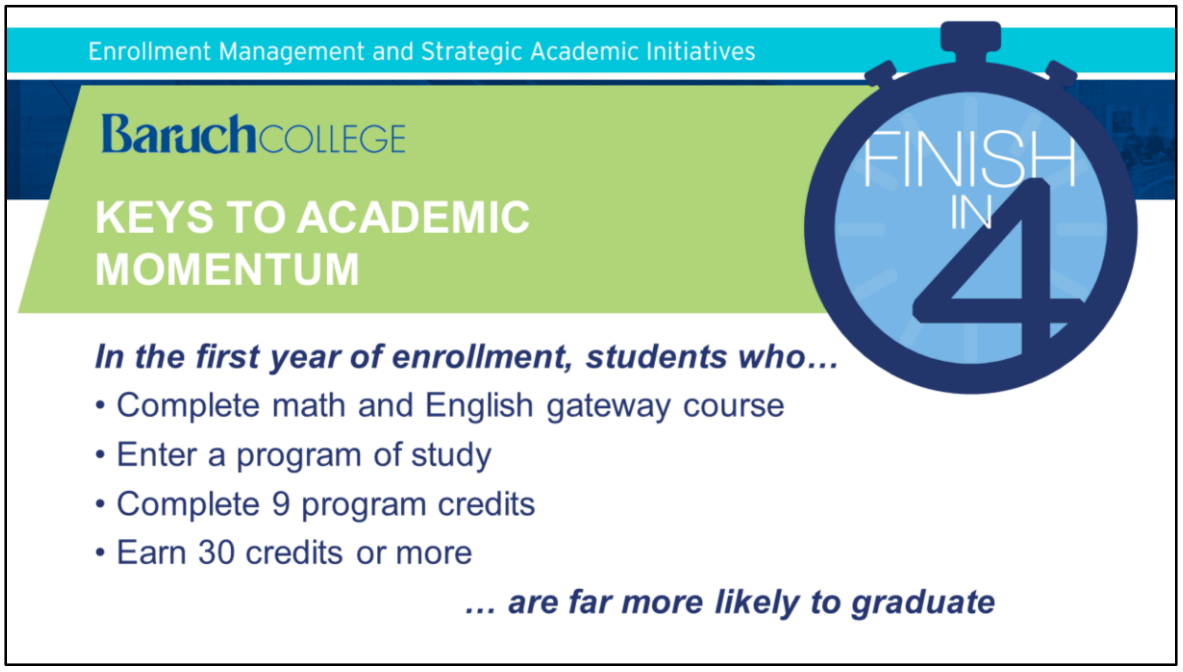
In the momentum plans we put together, we were asked to address three distinct

buckets

- we've already spoken a bit about our credit accumulation campaign, and we'll come back to that and the role you can play

- Success in gateway mathematics and writing courses. Co-requisite course being developed with Math department and SACC to cover college algebra and provide support to students, many of whom might otherwise not have placed into credit-bearing math.
- In addition, writing also undertaking a study to determine why students don't pass to develop appropriate interventions

- Degree maps – advisement center now has a complete set of maps covering each major available on their website. We are now working to develop partnerships with our largest community college feeder schools to make sure they and their students interested in transferring are aware of, and following to the extent possible, these maps prior to transfer



- I want to talk a little bit about why we are doing this.

- At the momentum conference, we heard from national experts about the factors that influence the likelihood of students succeeding and earning degrees. Complete College America's research demonstrated that students who…

- This is what drove the guidelines for developing our momentum plan.

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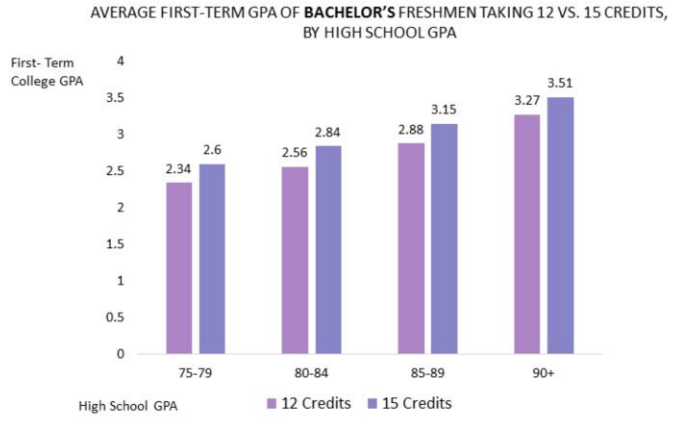
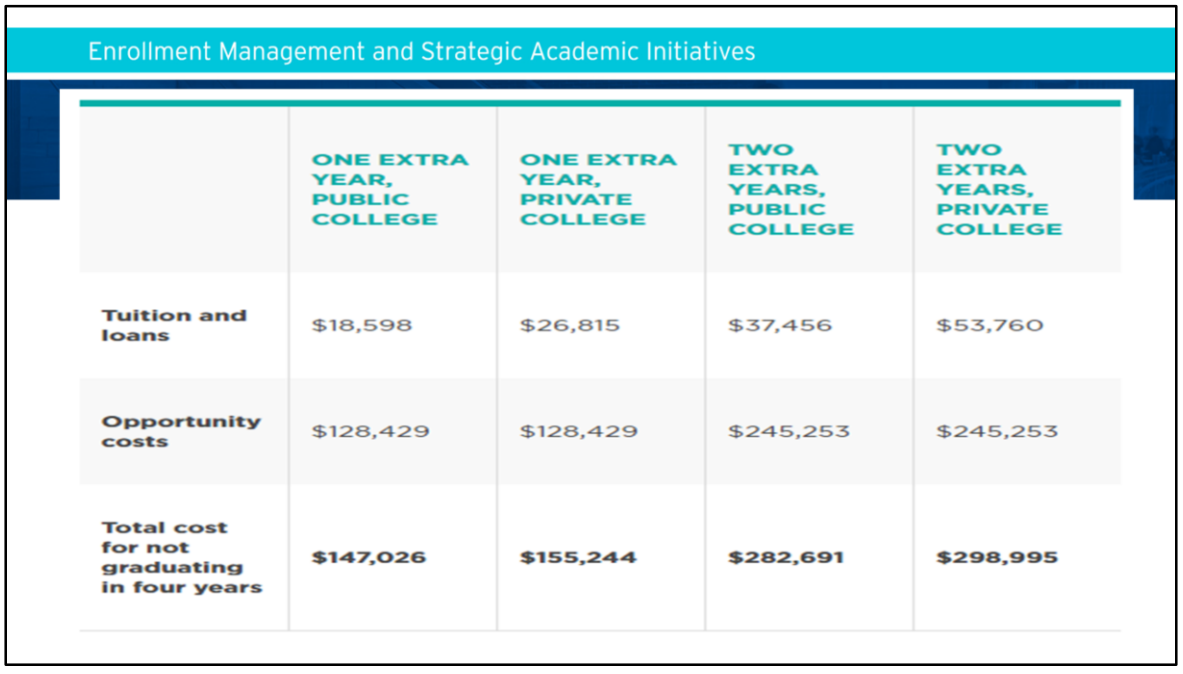
On average, students who take more courses do better. That appears to be true of students at all levels of academic preparation.



Moreover, CUNY data demonstrates that students who take 15 credits outperform those who attempt only 12, regardless of how well-prepared the students are to begin with.



	ONE EXTRA YEAR, PUBLIC COLLEGE	ONE EXTRA YEAR, PRIVATE COLLEGE	TWO EXTRA YEARS, PUBLIC COLLEGE	TWO EXTRA YEARS, PRIVATE COLLEGE
Tuition and loans	$18,598	$26,815	$37,456	$53,760
Opportunity costs	$128,429	$128,429	$245,253	$245,253
Total cost for not graduating in four years	**$147,026**	**$155,244**	**$282,691**	**$298,995**

There are significant financial incentives to completing a degree on-time. Here you see the national data generated by CCA on the economic impact of extending study for one or two years.

Moreover, here in New York, both TAP and Excelsior are limited to only eight semesters. The same is true of the vast majority of the private scholarship awards our students receive. In many cases, students pay out of pocket for any time spent in college beyond the fourth year.

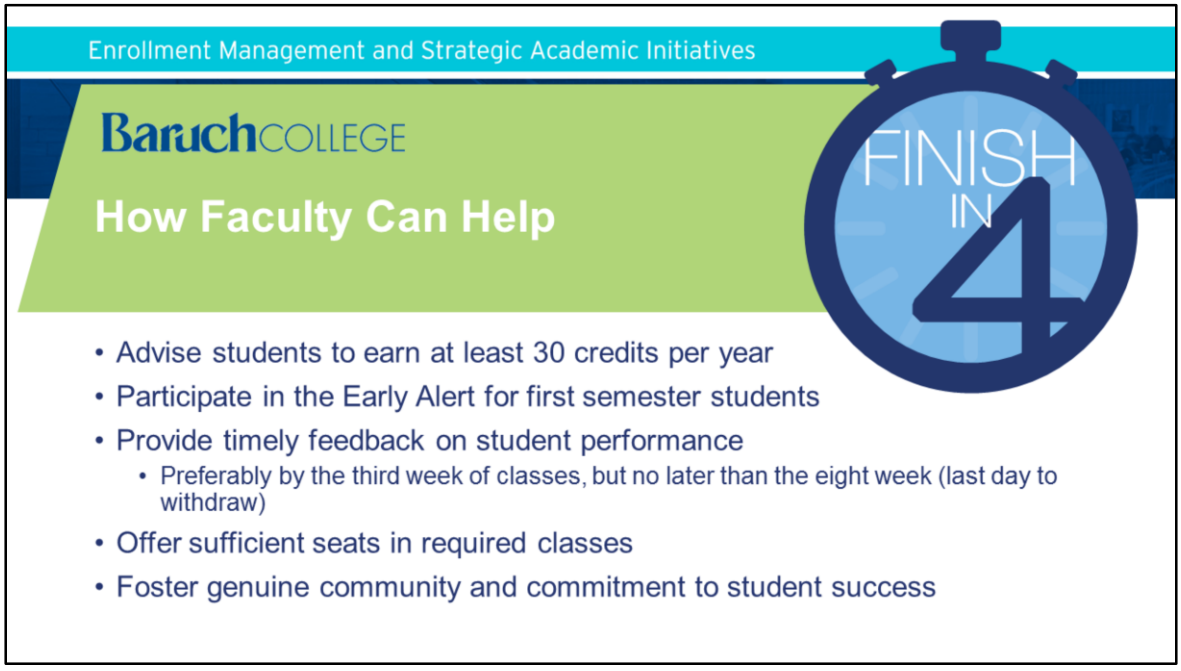
Our students arrive here expecting to graduate in four years.

Their parents send them to college expecting them to earn a degree in four years. (I have a child who will begin college this September; I have absolutely no desire to be writing checks past the spring of 2022)

Almost no one embarks on their college career expecting to be on the five… or six… or eight year plan.

We've become remarkably complacent about the fact that well fewer than half our students actually live up to that quite reasonable expectation.

I would posit that we have an ethical obligation as an institution to do everything in our power to assist our students in earning their degree within four years.



When you speak with students, convey that 30 credits per year is the expectation, and necessary to keep on track to earn their degree on time.

Participate, and encourage your colleagues to participate in our early alert program. Math department commit to 100% participation in early alerts last spring, and it's driven our overall participation rate up from high 20s to over 60% this fall. This term, math and the writing program have taken it a step further, and agreed to move their alerts up to the third/fourth week of classes rather than the typical eighth week timing.

All departments can assist students at all levels by providing early graded feedback – best by third week, but certainly in advance of the withdrawal deadline, which comes in the eighth week.

Departments need to offer sufficient seats in required courses. Spring Orientation survey results show that the number one reason students did not register for a full course load was because there were not any classes left that fit their schedule.

Enrollment Management has recently identified over twenty courses that routinely offer more than 500 seats per academic year (some in the thousands) but are

consistently filled to capacity; this information has been shared with the deans in order to facilitate course planning to include additional seats in these high volume maxed-out courses. We know that space constraints and availability of instructors makes that very challenging at times, but we need to be creative. We also know that in many of these courses, a significant part of the demand is driven by students taking the course for the second or even third time, which means that we can reduce some of the overwhelming demand by pedagogical innovation and the creation of more robust support systems to enable students to succeed the first time around.

Finally, I'll leave you with an observation that bubbled up in discussion at the senate's enrollment advisory committee meeting just recently. One of your colleagues asked how the graduation rates of distinct manageably-sized cohorts of students to whom we pay a lot of attention, such as Macaulay Honors and SEEK, compare to the overall population. It probably wouldn't surprise you to learn that the Honors students fare well in that regard. But what's more remarkable is that our SEEK students, who on paper look least likely to succeed here, and who in many cases have spent a lifetime with every imaginable obstacle thrown in their path, graduate at substantially higher rates than the general population. That's a testament to their innate talent and tenacity, for sure, but it's also a testament to what we can help students achieve when we build a supportive community around them. When there are faculty and staff who know their names, who pay attention to how they're doing, who know how to get them help when they have a financial aid issue, or need a tutor, or want to land their first internship – students can and do thrive.

With over 15,000 undergrads, there is no single office on campus that can offer that kind of support to all our students. But when we begin to think of our students in smaller segments or communities - in specific programs or department majors, for example - and think creatively about ways we can all lean in, even in small ways, to nudge our students along the path toward becoming our alumni, we can have real impact.

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Thank you!