The College Connections Project provides comprehensive college access services to New York City adults. The CCP aims to inspire, motivate, and empower non-traditional adults to seek higher education.

The CCP is one of 126 TRIO Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) programs funded by the US Department of Education under the Higher Education Act of 1965. The CCP is based at the Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC), which is administered by Borough of Manhattan Community College.

The CCP was launched in Fall 2011 and does not advocate on behalf of any one college or recruit for any single college or higher education system. Instead the CCP supports participants with application assistance to all colleges, universities, and postsecondary programs.

Besides EOCs, federal TRIO programs include Upward Bound, Veterans Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement. TRIO programs are targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs.

“Before the College Connections Project, I wasn’t sure how I would even start. They provided the information I needed to figure out what it would actually take to go back to school after having a career and what I need to consider in order to be successful.”

--Margaret R., College Connections Project Participant
Letter From the Project Director:

The 2012-2013 year was the second year of operation for the College Connections Project, and it was a good one. More than 1,000 New York City adults received services from the CCP, and 435 of them subsequently enrolled in postsecondary education.

The CCP’s efforts are a small part of a much bigger effort aimed at advancing more adults towards college-going. President Obama has said, “By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.” This goal cannot be accomplished solely by increasing the college access and success rates of high school graduates. More adults need to complete college. The strength of this country’s economy depends on the extent to which the postsecondary access and success of adults is increased, and the CCP plays a very small but nonetheless valuable role in this effort.

In this report, you will see charts and graphs that tell you about CCP participants and their achievements during the 2012-2013 year, including earning GEDs, completing college applications, completing financial aid applications, and enrolling in college. As a result of certain numbers of CCP participants meeting milestone targets, the CCP met goals that were set in the initial grant application to the US Department of Education.

The staff of the CCP—myself, Stacy Cummins, and Jill Janofsky—are gratified by the aggregate numbers of 1,007 participants and 435 college enrollments and also gratified that the CCP met targets set with the US Department of Education. However, our greatest gratification comes from the everyday work of providing assistance to CCP participants. Our participants are anything but numbers to us, and our satisfaction comes from listening to them and being advocates, troubleshooters, educators, and partners in their educational journeys. A particular highlight of this report is the participant feedback provided as part of a satisfaction survey administered in September 2013.
The CCP is funded primarily by the US Department of Education under a TRIO Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) grant. The MEOC is the perfect home for the CCP, and that’s not just because of the overlap between the MEOC name and the TRIO Educational Opportunity Center name. With the CCP, the MEOC’s many college-aspiring adult education students have easy access to college access services while the CCP has a built in core of participants enrolled in MEOC academic and vocational courses. The CCP is fortunate to have the leadership of MEOC Executive Director Dr. John L. Graham.

The results and successes shared in this report, while belonging to the CCP participants themselves, were made possible by much hard work, coordination, and organization by not only the CCP staff and the larger MEOC staff but also that of staff at many community organizations that partner with the CCP. Thank you particularly to the staff at the CUNY Language Immersion Programs, SUNY Empire State College, the CUNY Welcome Center, and the Bronx Educational Opportunity Center; these organizations share the CCP’s commitment to ensuring that adults who aspire to college-going get through the often tricky steps of completing college and financial aid applications as well as the often trickier post-admission enrollment steps. No adult learner should be left behind.

A final note of thanks also goes out to the BMCC Grants and Research Administration Office and to the CUNY Research Foundation. An incredible amount goes on behind the scenes to keep a grant-funded program going.

The CCP is still an evolving program, and it will always be a work in progress. We look forward to your involvement and input in our future.

Eric Neutuch
Coordinator, Strategic College Initiatives
& Project Director, College Connections Project
Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center
Annual Performance Report Data

The MEOC submitted to the US Department of Education on December 9, 2013 the required Annual Performance. The data below is from that report.

CCP Demographics
The CCP was funded to engage 1,000 participants during the 2012-2013 year. The CCP engaged 1,007 participants, up from 542 during the 2011-2012 start-up year.

- Low-Income & First-Generation: 69% of participants were low-income (150% of federal poverty line) and potential first-generation college-bound students (from families in which neither parent has a bachelor's degree).
- Gender: 58% Female, 42% Male
- Age: 28 Median Age
- Military Connected Participants: 19 Participants
- Limited English Proficient Participants: 208 Participants
- Race/Ethnicity: 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, 12% Asian, 40% Black or African American, 31% Hispanic/Latino, 9% White, 2% Two or More Races Non-Hispanic/Latino, 5% Unknown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Status Category</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult w/o HS Cred (enrolled in ed program)</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult w/o HS Cred (not enrolled in ed program)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>HS/GED Graduate</td>
<td>481</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Dropout with HS Cred</td>
<td>370</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Dropout w/o HS Cred</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential Postsecondary Transfer</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Student</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Participant, Age 19+</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1007</strong></td>
</tr>
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Milestone Completion

• High School Equivalency (HSE) Completion: 41 participants out of 118 participants who were accepted into the CCP without a HS/HSE diploma earned a HSE diploma or a regular HS diploma by 8/31/2013. HSE Completion Percentage: 35%

• Financial Aid Application Completion: 646 participants out of 977 eligible participants completed a financial aid application by 8/31/2013. Financial Aid Application Completion Percentage: 66%

• College Application Completion: 527 participants out of 977 eligible participants completed a college application by 8/31/2013. College Application Completion Percentage: 54%

• Postsecondary Enrollment: 435 participants out of 912 “college-ready” participants enrolled in college subsequent to their CCP entry date. Postsecondary Enrollment Percentage: 48%

Postsecondary Enrollment: College Types

64% of the 435 college enrollees matriculated at CUNY community colleges. Other popular choices were CUNY comprehensive colleges and SUNY Empire State College.
Prior Experience Points
Prior Experience points are awarded upon meeting milestone targets. Prior Experience points accrue during the project’s second, third, and fourth years towards grant renewal in 2016. Ten points out of a possible fifteen were earned, putting the CCP in an advantaged position for grant renewal over new applicants without Prior Experience points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Actual Completion Percentage</th>
<th>Target Percentage</th>
<th>Number of Prior Experience Points Earned</th>
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<tr>
<td>Enrollment Target</td>
<td>1007 Participants</td>
<td>1000 Participants</td>
<td>3 out of 3 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS/HSE Diploma Objective</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>0 out of 3 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid Application Completion</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>2 out of 2 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Admission Application Completion</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>0 out of 2 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Education Enrollment</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>5 out of 5 Points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant Satisfaction

- 95.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I would recommend the CCP to friends interested in college-related information and assistance.”
- 93.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I benefited from CCP activities.”
- 97.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I am satisfied with the assistance provided to me by the CCP.”
- 95.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “The CCP staff was courteous, professional, and approachable.”

(Source: CCP Participant Survey, September 2013, 86 electronic responses. See full report from evaluation consultant Sam Milder.)
Participants with College Application Envelopes
“I had doubts as to whether I was going to pass the Writing test. Then I attended the CAT Test Prep workshop, and I’m so glad that I passed.”
--Celia P., College Connections Project Participant
Admitted to BMCC

“I’m appreciative of the fee waiver. It made it easy for me to get my application done.”
–Grisel R., College Connections Project Participant

Program Staff, 2012-2013:

• Eric Neutuch, Project Director
• Stacy Cummins, College Advisor
• Jill Janofsky, College Advisor
• Mashika Patterson, Administrative Assistant 2012-2013 (Currently MEOC Office Assistant, Resource Lab & Library)
• Layla Merrit, Tutor
• Raydenys Sosa, Tutor
Program Highlights

One-on-One College Advising and Financial Aid Application Assistance
The core activity of the CCP is one-on-one college advising and financial aid application assistance. The advising assistance provided includes assessing participant’s postsecondary interests and then assisting and proofing as they complete college and financial aid applications at a computer terminal. CCP’s advising expertise is in troubleshooting tricky financial aid and college admission issues including figuring out whether a foreign transcript translation meets a college’s documentation requirements, investigating past student loans via the National Student Loan Data System, and guiding participants through CUNY’s post-admission steps (immunizations, residency proof, commitment deposit, testing scheduling, and academic advisement). Meggan M. wrote on her participant satisfaction survey, “[My advisor] helped me reallocate to City College. They would not have taken me had she not advised me to inform them that I was accepted at Hunter.”

Enhanced College Access Services for MEOC Students
More than 200 CCP participants during 2012-2013 were enrolled in an academic or vocational program at the MEOC. The MEOC students who participated in the CCP benefitted from the MEOC’s high-caliber academic and vocational programs, including ESL, GED, College Preparation, Security Officer Training, and more. MEOC students additionally benefitted from college access services funded separately by the MEOC’s College Connections Initiative, an initiative across New York State-funded EOCs to provide college awareness and information to EOC enrolled students. These services included college trips and the College Knowledge Workshop, a 25-hour instructional classroom course that walks enrolled participants through the college admission, financial aid, and college enrollment processes. MEOC services also include a Job Readiness and Training course incorporating in-depth modules on financial literacy that meet the TRIO EOC goal of counseling participants on basic financial planning.
Workshops and Partnerships with Community Organizations

The CCP conducted “Essentials of College Planning Workshops” and “Financial Aid Workshops” at more than twenty locations. Presentations were conducted at the MEOC, Bronx Educational Opportunity Center, Queens Educational Opportunity Center, Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center, Bronx Adult Learning Center, Queens Adult Learning Center, Brooklyn Adult Learning Center, Double Discovery Center, BMCC Health Lattice program, BMCC Career Path program, Covenant House, Young Adult Borough Center at Columbus HS, Children’s Village, South Bronx Regional Economic Development Corporation, College and Community Fellowship, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, and Fountain House. Follow-up advising was provided to workshop attendees. Additionally, the CCP provided information about college-going and CCP services at fair events held by GED Plus, Abyssinian Development Corporation’s YouthBuild program, and Workforce One.

April Financial Aid Workshop

Twenty-four CCP participants attended a special Financial Aid Workshop at the MEOC in late April, shortly after the April 15th tax filing deadline. Participants learned about the financial aid process and then completed financial aid applications in a computer lab with the assistance of CCP staff.

CUNY Assessment Test Preparation Workshops

The CUNY Assessment Tests (CATs) are high-stakes tests administered primarily at CUNY community colleges that determine placement into remedial courses. More than 150 CCP participants attended eight CCP CAT Test Prep Workshops. The workshop runs for two hours, and the first part covers the structure of the CATs, test prep strategies, and CUNY special programs aimed at those who fail multiple sections of the CATs. The second part of the workshop consists of practice problems. The popular workshop is a unique service of the CCP that is not available from other college access providers or most CUNY colleges. The positive student feedback seems to indicate that the workshops are meeting a need for CAT overview information.
College Application Fee Waiver Program

181 participants benefitted from the payment of college application fees, 142 to CUNY, 37 to SUNY Empire State College, 1 to both those colleges, and 1 to New York Career Institute (court reporter program). Many of the recipients of fee payments self-report having held off on submitting their college applications prior to taking advantage of the Application Fee Waiver Program. Shenika, a single parent on welfare whose CUNY application fee was paid for by the CCP and who went on to enroll at College of Staten Island said to us, “[If I hadn’t gotten the fee waiver], I probably would have been stuck figuring out how I would have gotten the money. I would have had to wait until I had earned it.”

The policies around eligibility for the application fee payments were modified in late October 2012. Subsequent to the modification, the Application Fee Waiver Program became more limited, and other services became a greater share of the CCP’s operations.

Partnerships with CLIP Programs

The CCP partners with the CUNY Language Immersion Programs (CLIP) administered by BMCC and the New York City College of Technology. Through these partnerships, the CCP engaged during the 2012-2013 year approximately 119 BMCC CUNY CLIP students and 84 CityTech CUNY CLIP students with activities including financial aid information workshops, financial aid application completion workshops, college knowledge workshops, and one-on-one financial aid advising. Financial aid advising focused on the financial aid application and verification issues faced by CLIP students, many of whom have parents living and earning money abroad, must provide residency documents to the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, and overall, are unfamiliar with American financial aid.

Partnership with SUNY Empire State College

SUNY Empire State College (ESC) calls itself the “SUNY College for Adults,” and has campuses in Manhattan (West Village), Brooklyn, and Staten Island. Under the CCP’s partnership with SUNY ESC, the CCP conducts small group workshops on completing the SUNY ESC application essay and applying for financial aid at SUNY ESC campuses. Both workshops are ones developed by the CCP and not offered by the time-limited SUNY ESC admissions staff.
Eighteen “Admission Essay Workshops,” and twenty-one “Financial Aid Workshops” were conducted in 2012-2013, with combined attendance of more than 125. The SUNY ESC partnership also extended application fee payments to low-income, first-generation college-bound adults who participate in CCP one-on-one advising. Overall, the SUNY ESC partnership connected the CCP with motivated college-aspiring adults who went on to complete college applications and enroll in college at SUNY ESC or elsewhere at very high rates. For instance, of the 187 non-college enrolled CCP participants who came to the CCP via the SUNY ESC partnership, 123 completed college applications.

**Tutoring for MEOC Students**
Layla Merritt, a Writing Tutor, provided tutoring to MEOC students preparing for the GED and CUNY Assessment Tests. Tutoring was provided at the MEOC and also at Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC), the site of an offsite MEOC GED program. Layla received instructional materials from the MEOC’s Academic Affairs Department, which also publicized the tutoring to regular MEOC students and MEOC ADC students.

**Professional Development**
CCP staff participated in several professional development and networking opportunities. Eric attended the annual conference of the Association for Equity and Excellence in Education conference (Atlantic City, NJ), and Eric also presented at the annual conference of the National College Transitions Network (Providence, RI) and the annual conference of the National Educational Opportunity Centers Associates (New York, NY). Stacy and Jill attended the annual conference of the Council for Opportunity in Education (New York, NY) and a regional conference of the National Academic Advising Association (New Brunswick, NJ). Attendance at conferences, especially the AEeee and COE conferences, connected the CCP with other TRIO professionals.

**CUNY TRIO Council**
The CCP began participating in meetings of the CUNY TRIO Council in Spring 2013. The Council works to raise the visibility of the twenty plus TRIO programs within CUNY. The Council also provides a forum for directors to share best practices. The Council is chaired by University Associate Dean of Special Programs Cheryl Williams.
The MEOC CCP operated on TRIO EOC funding of $218,880 for the 2012-2013 fiscal year ($219 per participant). $213,632 was spent, leaving of a balance of $5,248 to be rolled over into the 2013-2014 sequestration year. Extensive additional contributions, both in-kind and financial, were provided by the MEOC and BMCC. Financial contributions from the MEOC and BMCC were used for the purchase of college application fee waivers, advertising and marketing expenses, and an institutional membership to the Council for Opportunity in Education.

### Financials

Financials

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<th>Expense Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Staff Compensation (Includes Release Time)</td>
<td>$138,320</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finge Benefits &amp; Payroll Costs</td>
<td>$46,698</td>
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<tr>
<td>OTPS Costs</td>
<td>$12,984</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indirect Costs</td>
<td>$15,630</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rollover Balance</td>
<td>$5,248</td>
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</table>

### CCP Expenses 2012-2013

- Staff Compensation (Includes Release Time): 63%
- Fringe Benefits & Payroll Costs: 21%
- OTPS Costs: 6%
- Indirect Costs: 7%
- Rollover Balance: 3%
Approximately 39 million Americans do not have a high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma. LaTrese Sunderlin is not one of them. LaTrese enrolled in GED classes at the MEOC—first in an adult basic education classes and then in GED classes. In April 2013 at age 19, she earned her GED. Her goal was, she says, “to do something with my life and go on to become a lawyer. I needed to go to college.”

After earning her GED, LaTrese applied to the SUNY system with the assistance of her aunt and MEOC Academic Advisor Samuel Paul. Financial aid, however, seemed daunting so LaTrese and her family turned to the CCP for assistance with completing the applications and projecting her college costs. With the help of CCP College Advisor Stacy Cummins, LaTrese completed the FAFSA and TAP applications and later successfully viewed her FAFSA Student Aid Report.

LaTrese currently is excelling as a freshman in the Educational Opportunity Program at SUNY Schenectady Community College with a GPA of nearly 3.7. She is living on-campus, and one of her English papers is going to be used as a model for all incoming EOP freshmen. She’s grateful for all the help from the MEOC, including the CCP. LaTrese states, “My experience at the MEOC has taught me how to face adulthood. I have learned how to be an adult.”
Success Story by Jeffrey Goldenberg

My name is Jeffrey Goldenberg and I want to share with everybody a few words about my successful experience with the College Connections Project at the MEOC.

I am forty-four, and did not possess a high school diploma until May 2013. Through the dedicated and caring staff and faculty at the Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC), I realized a life-long dream of mine by obtaining my high school equivalency diploma. Then the even bigger dream of going to college came true this year due in large part to the wonderful and caring staff of the College Connections Project at MEOC. Through their wise counseling and heart-felt concern, I was able to navigate my way through the challenging process of enrolling in college and obtaining financial aid.

Now in December 2013, I am successfully finishing my first semester at the New York City College of Technology of the City University of New York. I am working towards my Associate’s degree in construction management technology. Before enrolling in college, I worked as a welder and construction worker, and this course of study is the perfect match for my experience and my future career goals.

I had previously not known about City Tech and did not even know that a college offered this kind of degree or course of study. It was only through the advice and information from Mr. Eric Neutuch and Ms. Jill Janofsky that I decided to pursue higher education at City Tech. They not only offered me the information about this college, but also gave me encouragement and the will to achieve my educational goals.

The College Connections Project has helped me transform my life in ways that are almost impossible to describe in words. My entire experience with them is one of the most inspiring and positive I have had in my life and I will be forever grateful for the existence of the CCP and the MEOC.
I only hope and pray that they will continue in their mission of helping many other people like me to realize their hopes and dreams of working towards a better future for themselves and their families.

From the deepest part of my heart and soul, I say thank you to MEOC and the College Connections Project.
“I’m currently a college senior having re-entered Long Island University. The college advisor I saw was extraordinary in walking me through the benefits I might receive and applying for them.”

--James M., College Connections Project Participant
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collegeconnections@man.eoc.cuny.edu

Please contact us with questions regarding partnership opportunities.
All MEOC CCP services are FREE.