

# Walking the Same Hallways Youth Leadership for College Access



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[www.caranyc.org](http://www.caranyc.org)

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The path from high school to college success is a challenging one, and this is especially true for first-generation college goers. There has never been so much focus and push toward college attendance, nor has there ever been a time when the cost, academic preparation, and road to enrollment were so difficult to maneuver.

At the Brooklyn Community Foundation, we are committed to helping our young people achieve their fullest potential, particularly those students who will face the greatest hurdles. Ours is a creative community, where people come to realize their dreams and discover new ones. Yet many of our students grown up in neighborhoods plagued by persistent poverty and failing schools. According to the *Brooklyn Neighborhood Reports*, which we recently published in partnership with the Center for the Study of Brooklyn at Brooklyn College, in the 2010 - 2011 academic year, the Brooklyn high school graduation rate (58.8%) and percentage of high school seniors enrolled in colleges (42.7%) lagged behind the city and state—but the real shocker is that a mere 17.8% of our students were considered college-ready.

Over a lifetime, on average, a high school dropout will earn \$300,000 less than a high school graduate and \$1 million less than a college graduate. Without a roadmap to college, students are less likely to graduate high school, putting them at a much higher risk for unemployment, poverty, and incarceration. And the odds are against students from low income families, who are six times more likely to drop out of high school than students from higher income families; among those who do graduate, only 1 in 3 can expect to enroll in college—only one of seven of whom will go on to earn a degree.

The Brooklyn Community Foundation is a force for community-wide change—and higher education is a proven instrument for igniting change. Through our Education and Youth Achievement Fund, we support a range of programs and strategies in schools and community-based organizations to foster college access and readiness. The numbers are improving: in every Brooklyn Community District, more young people are graduating from high school and earning college degrees. We need to create even greater momentum for this trend—particularly in our poorest communities. The White Paper you have before you—Walking the Same Hallways—highlights an emerging practice which we think holds great promise: ***Youth Leadership for College Access***.

In the White Paper, Lori Chajet and Lisa Cowan highlight a number of programs in the city that are putting young people in a leadership role to help their peers to prepare for college and to move through the application process. In these programs, high school students are not just recipients of college guidance services, but are active participants in the design and delivery of college guidance. There is no question that this leadership role benefits the Youth Leaders themselves, but Chajet and Cowan find that it also benefits their peers, communities, and the institutions in which they are working. They are not just getting more kids into college, but they are working to create schools and CBOs that reflect true youth voice and leadership.

A better-educated Brooklyn leads directly to many of the other priorities the Community Foundation supports: moving families to income security, providing neighborhood stability, giving Brooklyn's young people the skills and space to discover the arts, and keeping our communities green and healthy. Every day, we are learning from our grantees how to create a better Brooklyn—we hope that this White Paper will allow you to learn from our young people how to better support them on their journeys to college and beyond.



Marilyn Gelber, President  
Brooklyn Community Foundation

*As a Youth Leader ... I keep students on track and make sure they complete the right steps on time. Because I am also a student, we are in class together, in lunch together and walking the same hallways. I use all of those times to remind students about what they need to be doing for college.*

**- Youth Leader, Franklin K. Lane Campus Student Success Center**

Many high schools across the country, and particularly within New York City, have shifted their end goal from high school graduation to college enrollment. In the process, many are also discovering just how complicated it can be to realize a *college for all* vision in under-resourced schools serving primarily first-generation college-bound students; the challenge is all the greater in a post-secondary landscape where “college” can mean many different things. Young people from low-income communities are five times less likely to enroll in college than students coming from middle and high-income families. As such, they are in need of extensive supports to move through the college exploration, application and matriculation process.

Unfortunately, public schools, by themselves, are rarely able to meet the many and varied needs of first-generation students. Over the past three years our organization, *College Access: Research & Action (CARA)*, has been part of the evolution of a strategy that we believe holds enormous potential for enacting a college for all vision: youth leadership. Organizations and schools that have invested time, resources, and belief in the ability of young people to support their peers through the college awareness and planning process are noticing the impact. The purpose of this White Paper, funded by the Brooklyn Community Foundation, is to review how select New York City organizations and schools are currently using youth leadership in their college access programming, expanding the roles that young people take on – not just as recipients of counseling or services, but as active participants in creating and implementing college counseling strategies and support. These young people, referred to in this paper as ‘Youth Leaders’, offer a way to create or modify college access programs that respond to needs of first generation students both in schools and in communities. Its intent is to help schools, CBOs, and funders to further develop and support youth leadership as a strategy in post-secondary planning.

## **College Access: The Challenges**

In the United States there is an ever-growing gap between students’ aspirations for college and their achievement. The benefits of a college degree, which are often cited to high school

students, are compelling. As reported by the CollegeBoard (2011), individuals with a college degree<sup>1</sup>:

- Earn an average of \$22,000 more per year than those with a high school diploma;
- Earn an average of 63% more in hourly wages than those with only a high school diploma;
- Are much more likely to receive employer-provided health insurance.

Current research indicates that 95% of high school students want to go to college (Adelman 2002; Kinzie et al. 2004; Rosenbaum 2001) but far fewer actually enroll, and even fewer persist to graduation. Nationally, 55% of graduates from low-income families enroll in college (US Department of Education, 2011) and, by the age of 24, 12% of students from the bottom income quartile earn a degree (Mortenson 2007). In New York City, 70% of those students who graduate high school in four years enroll in college; however, only 65% of students complete high school in four years.

58% of New York City's public high school graduates who go to college attend CUNY. Once in the CUNY system, achievement indicators are as follows:

- 67% of first-year students are placed into remedial courses;
- 47% of those who begin a BA program complete it within six years;
- 10% of those who begin an AA program complete it within 3 years (GraduateNYC!, 2010).

In response to these statistics, the New York City Department of Education and the City University of New York have joined forces to launch a citywide push to increase college readiness and college-going rates for all students. Beyond getting their students to high school graduation, NYC high schools are beginning to be held accountable for whether their students enter and remain in college. Starting in 2012, a 'College Readiness' measure will be part of how high schools are assessed<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, GraduateNYC! – a partnership between the New York City Department of Education, CUNY, the Mayor's office, and community-based organizations throughout the city – has set the goal of “doubling the Numbers” by 2020. Specifically, this means:

- Increasing the percentage of high school graduates achieving a 75+ on Math and ELA Regents exams from 46% (2009) to 75% (2020). Note: Students who score 75+ on these exams are exempt from remedial coursework at CUNY.
- Increasing Associates Degree 3-year completion rates from 10% to 25% and 4-year completion rates from 15% to 40%.
- Increasing Bachelors Degree 6-year completion rates from 47% to 61%.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to benefits to the individual, society benefits from increased numbers of college graduates. Individuals with a college degree, in comparison to those with a high school degree, are: 30% more likely to vote; twice as likely to volunteer; less likely to be obese; more likely to engage in exercise; more likely to read to their children (CollegeBoard, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> The “College Readiness” metric is made up of a combination of: college enrollment rates as determined by National Student Clearinghouse data; the number of students completing dual enrollment, AP, or other certified college-ready courses; and percent of students exempt from CUNY remedial coursework because of ELA and Math Regents scores.

As schools and colleges struggle to meet these new accountability measures and goals, they have to confront many challenges. While most parents of first-generation college-bound students encourage their children to apply to college, they often lack the knowledge, resources, and time needed to support them through the specifics of the process. Making the post-secondary planning process that much more challenging for these students, NYC schools do not have a dedicated line for college counselors in their budgets, and school-based guidance counselors rarely have the time or expertise to meet the volume of students' needs. Among other things, schools have to better address: academic preparation of students; one-on-one counseling; integration of curriculum to help students develop the knowledge and skills to make informed post-secondary choices; support to graduates in months between graduation and college matriculation; and family involvement in post-secondary planning process.

It remains to be seen whether the additional scrutiny placed upon New York City high schools will be accompanied by the training, support and funding to allow schools to improve their college guidance programs, but, either way, there will be more attention paid to their outcomes. The deep need and increased attention makes this a timely moment to examine programs that address college access and retention.

## **Toward a Solution**

Practitioners struggle on a daily basis to address students' needs so that they can develop and realize their college dreams. Various approaches are used nationally and locally in a variety of settings.

Traditionally, not every student was expected to go to college, and the school guidance counselor's role included college counseling among many other duties. As schools move to a 'college for all' mission, the guidance counselor role demands rethinking and restructuring. In many schools, that counselor still takes on the bulk of the work. The commonly understood best practice ratio for college counseling is 1:100, counselor:student. NYC public schools cannot approach that ratio with current resources, and so school leaders have turned to other models and structures.

Many schools partner with community-based organizations, national non-profits or university-based programs to offer college access and counseling programs on-site. Some organizations come with their own curriculum; some target a certain group of students; others take high school students to college campuses or job sites; while still others seek to bring college-level courses to the high schools. Some CBOs and non-profits also (or alternatively) offer college guidance in their communities, separate from school-based programming.

In Spring 2011 the Graduate NYC! staff set out to determine how many non-profit agencies in the city were providing college support services, and what those services look like. Through an on-line survey sent to 253 New York City agencies identified as having college

readiness or transition programming, 154 agencies categorized their programs as addressing the following areas of college readiness: short and long-term personal goals, academic preparation, personal and academic behavior, and contextual skills and awareness.

Both the numbers of CBOs involved in college access work and the range of approaches they take are striking. While different approaches and program models are appropriate to different schools and settings, we believe that many lend themselves to the integration of youth leadership strategies. Given the rich history of youth development work in many CBOs, and the deep connections between youth development and youth leadership, there is a real opportunity to examine and grow the youth leader role in the delivery of college access and guidance services in New York City.

### **Focusing in on Youth Leadership for College Access in New York City**

The role of Youth Leader, as we are defining it in this paper, lies at the intersection of youth development and youth organizing. Youth Leaders develop the skills that are the outcomes of good youth development programs: listening, critical thinking, planning, public speaking, organization, meeting facilitation, teamwork, self-advocacy and perseverance. Research has shown that these skills are critical to success in college. College access youth leadership programming take this work one step further by empowering young people to use these skills not only to improve their own educational and social outcomes, but also as a strategy to make college access possible for a wider circle of students, to improve the college-going culture of their school, and to increase youth voice and authority within their schools.

In addition to developing their own competencies, skilled Youth Leaders are also able to model communication, self-advocacy and organizational skills in their work with their peers. In the end, both the youth leaders themselves and the students they work with develop skills critical to post-secondary success.

In order to explore and document the ways that college access programming in New York City incorporates youth leadership, CARA reached out to 50 organizations that were using some aspect of youth leadership in their college access programming. We gathered the organizations' names from the Brooklyn Community Foundation, the Graduate NYC network, and based on our own work in the field over the past ten years. It is likely that there are other organizations using youth leadership who we missed, but we were able to find several interesting program models.

24 of the organizations responded to our on-line survey<sup>3</sup> which asked for information on the types of services an organization provides, the role of school-aged youth within program delivery, the role of college-aged youth within program delivery, and the organization's interest in further developing youth roles. Based on the survey responses, we followed up with eight organizations that indicated they positioned high school-aged

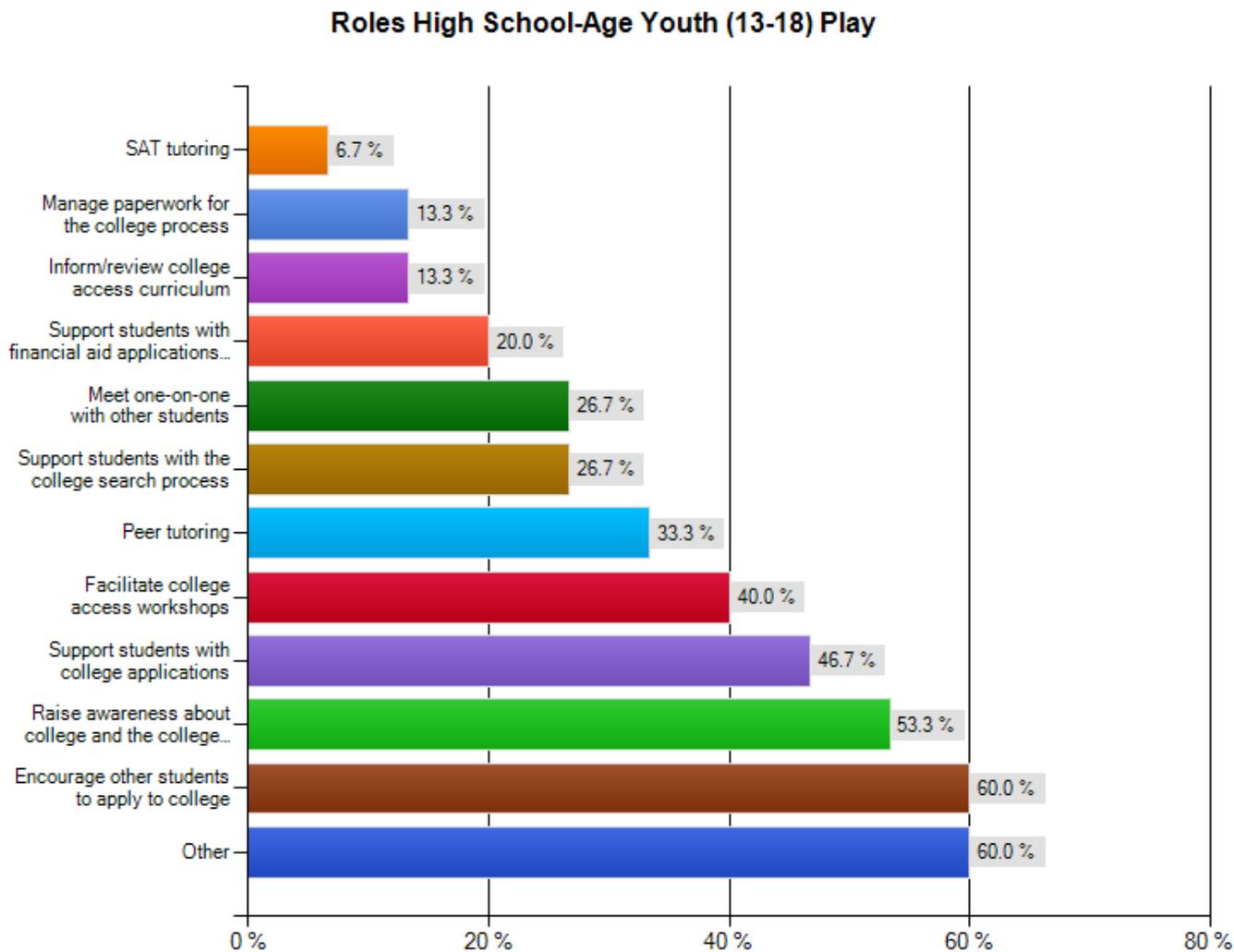
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<sup>3</sup> The survey is available on request.

students in leadership roles. CARA staff conducted interviews with each of these organizations, as well as site visits with select ones<sup>4</sup>.

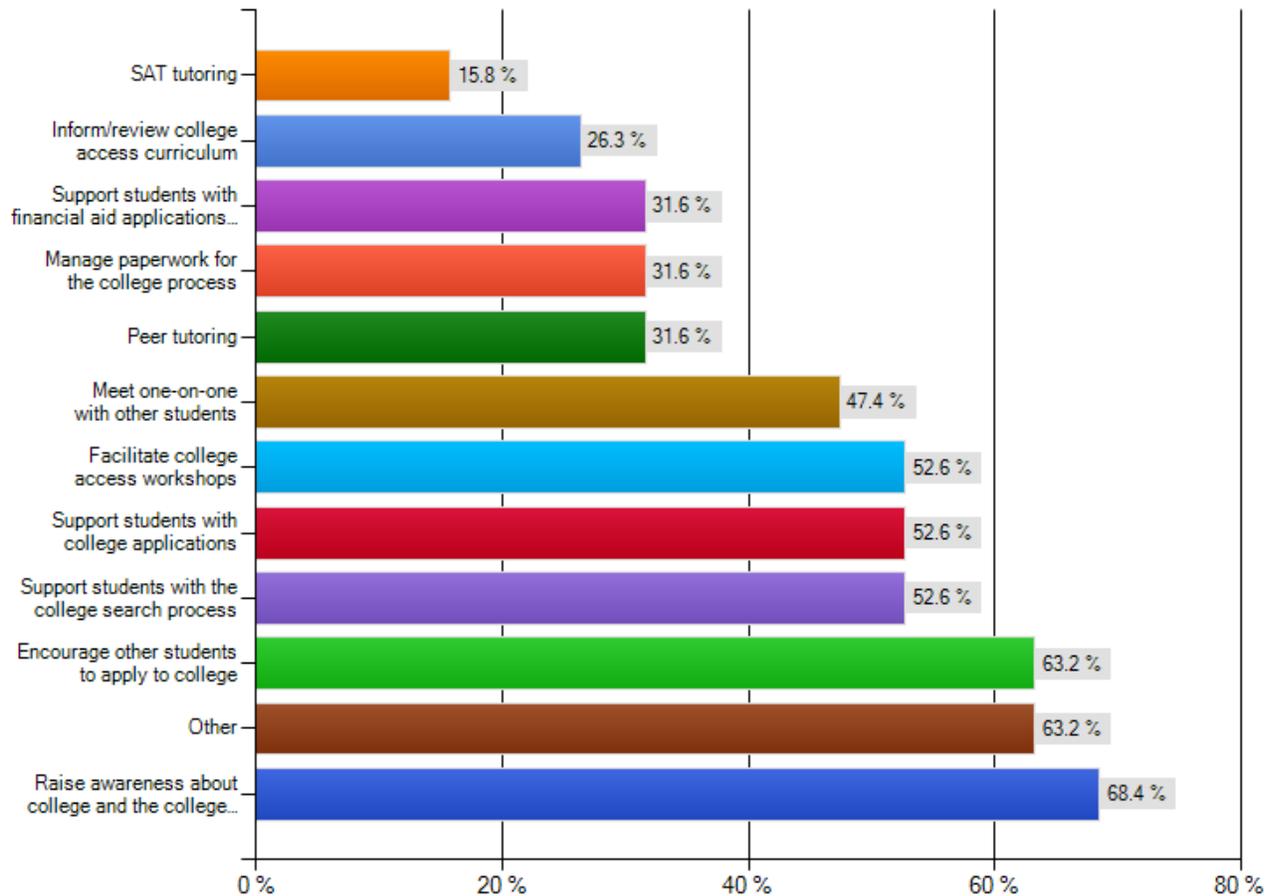
### Youth Leadership for College Access Programs across New York City

The 24 organizations that completed CARA’s survey demonstrated a valuing of youth-to-youth work in college access programming: 83% reported incorporating college-age youth into their program delivery and 63% incorporating high school-age youth (13-18). The way in which organizations position young people varied, but generally fit into one of two frameworks: student-as-motivator *or* student-as-coach. Within the former, high school and college students play a generally *encouraging* role and in the latter, they take on more targeted tasks, supporting other students through specific aspects of the college process.



<sup>4</sup> Not all organizations profiled in this White Paper responded to the original survey.

### Roles College-Age Youth Play



In preparing youth for their roles, organizations using a student-as-motivator model generally relied upon on-the-job training or used the fact that the youth had experienced their program as a participant as a form of training. Generally, organizations with a student-as-motivator model used youth in ad-hoc ways, having them provide application support on an as-needed basis, participate on a panel, or organize a college-related event.

Those organizations with a student-as-coach model had more explicit training programs, where youth were provided a set of specific skills and knowledge for doing things like building college awareness, conducting test prep, guiding college searches, and providing application, financial aid, and/or matriculation support. Organizations with more formalized roles for college and high school students linked their work to some type of compensation, either payment or academic credit.

Here we profile several programs in order to illustrate how youth leadership can be integrated into college access work through either a student-as-motivator or student-as-coach framework.

### ***In their own words...***

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*The CBSI (CollegeBound Summer Institute) trip was one of the most amazing and influential trips that I have ever attended. As I found myself exploring the college with fellow seniors, just the whole environment of meeting new people and being in front of people who had been through the same process, just had me so excited and so motivated to complete my senior year... I learned so much from how to approach a college essay to even learning how to make new friends. I re-enter[ed] [school] as one of the most confident and determined students in my senior class. I entered knowing I was going to go away to college and I am glad I made that decision...*

*I feel that I have influenced my peers, by pushing them to expand their minds and moving away from [NYC]. Not only did I want to be a part of a great education, but I wanted my friends to be witnesses of a great school as well, and now because of their hard work and dedication, most of them are now attending amazing colleges.*

*– CollegeBound Initiative  
Youth Leader*

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### **Student-as-Motivator**

A popular practice in high schools is to bring alumni back to talk with current students about their post-secondary experiences. This is a time for college students to reflect on what they would do differently if they could go back to high school, and to share specifics about what their college experiences are like, both academically and socially. Some organizations and schools have created specific events to ensure that this occurs. For example at the *Red Hook Initiative (RHI)*, a community-based organization in Brooklyn, there are three college panels per year, where alumni return to RHI and share their college experiences with high school and middle school participants. During the panel discussion high school students ask questions about college life. The panels are especially useful in the Fall when seniors are deep in the process and benefit from advice from a current college student. In an effort to create more of an on-going relationship between high school students and alumni, RHI created a Facebook group where college and high school students can stay connected.

When schools or organizations host events like this the extent of their training for the college students is to provide them with the format of the event and, at times, to give them student-generated questions in advance. Alumni are brought back on a volunteer basis and occasionally provided with a meal or a gift card to show appreciation for their time.

Along with bringing in college-going alumni, several programs throughout New York City are using the power of high school students to encourage and motivate other students to attend college. Sometimes this takes the form of seniors presenting to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders about what they should be prepared for and why they should be thinking about post-secondary planning as early as 9<sup>th</sup> grade. In other instances, seniors who have completed their own college process encourage their peers to do the same. The *YMCA of Greater*

*New York* holds an annual student-led college resource fair. As this event evolved, a teen council identified the need for youth-led workshops some of which address issues of health and fitness and others issues of college access. The teens run the workshops based on their own experience and they receive some training and information from their supervisors.

Both *College Bound Initiative (CBI)*<sup>5</sup> and *College Summit*<sup>6</sup> recruit school leaders and provide them with a summer institute focused on the college process. The goal of these summer institutes is two-fold. First, the institutes support the select group of students in their own college search and application process. Second, participating students are asked to bring the learning and enthusiasm they develop back to their peers. Both programs run their summer institutes on college campuses, and CBI uses alumni leaders to help facilitate the sessions. At the CBI summer institute, called CBSI, alumni are trained to run workshops on everything from goal setting to college essay writing to financial aid to the college experience. When the student leaders return to their high schools they are asked to help their peers with the college process (mostly during class time) and are, at times, asked to assist a particular student in the college office. At the College Summit Summer Institute, 20% of the rising seniors spend four days working on personal statements, meeting one-on-one with a guidance counselor, learning the basics of financial aid and gaining concrete skills in self-advocacy. During the school year, individual College Summit schools create plans to engage these “student influencers” to build college-going culture. The extent to which the trained students turn-key their summer experiences to help other students and the school as a whole varies from site to site. Neither CBI nor College Summit compensate their student leaders with credits or stipends. The students have on-going relationships with the college counselor at their school-site, but generally do not have set time for formalized supervision during the school year.

## **Student-as-Coach**

More organizations are beginning to create formalized and targeted roles for both college and high school students in college access programming. For example, the *Brooklyn College Community Partnership* uses Brooklyn College undergraduates to lead art projects, help students with college essays, and host high school student visits to college campuses. The college students take a college course called “Service Learning for Youth Workers,” which allows them to earn college credit while working with high school students at The BCCP’s sites throughout Brooklyn.

*Strive for College*, a national organization which recently opened a site on the NYU campus, trains college student mentors to guide low-income students through the application, financial aid, and enrollment process for four-year colleges. Mentors work with high school students one-on-one, either at their college or at the participating high school sites. The program works with students beginning in the spring of their junior year and continues

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<sup>5</sup> CBI is an organization that provides trained, full-time college counselors to a set of schools in New York City, and one in Philadelphia. In total the program has 17 schools.

<sup>6</sup> College Summit is a national organization that provides teachers and counselors with a managed curriculum and technology tools to help all students create postsecondary plans and apply to college.

## ***In Their Own Words***

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*... On several occasions, I had the opportunity to take small groups of students on trips to their college. We took care of all the needs of each student in attendance. The students stuck together throughout the entire day, even after their own issues were resolved. Every student that left on those days expressed to me that they would not have gone to the college in person if I had not offered to make that first trip with them. All of the issues resolved on those trips were absolutely vital to matriculation.*

*– College Coach, Bridge to College Program*

through the spring of their senior year, meeting weekly or bi-weekly sessions. Strive for College recruits volunteers for this work who do not receive course credit or pay for their work. *Bridge to College*, a program of The Urban Assembly, CUNY At Home in College, and CARA, trains alumni to act as ‘College Coaches’ to graduating seniors at their alma mater during the summer months when schools are closed and graduates are not yet connected to their colleges. The College Coaches are trained by the host organizations and the Goddard Options Institute to: deliver workshops to students during the spring before they graduate; meet with seniors one-on-one before graduation; and provide active outreach to graduates in July and August to help them navigate the obstacles that surface, such as challenges with financial aid, registration, paperwork, family, and other issues that would interfere with matriculation. College Coaches receive a stipend for their summer work.

Similar to programs working with college students, a few programs have moved towards giving high school students more defined roles for working with other students. Such programs are finding

that not only are the youth leaders themselves greatly changed by their work, but that they are able to support their peers in a way that adults cannot.

*Full Circle* is a program whose goal is to raise students’ SAT scores, as a means of securing scholarship money and gaining admission to residential colleges. The organization targets students whose scores are between an 800 and 1000, with the goal of raising them above 1000. Full Circle uses professional SAT tutors to train juniors to then work with sophomores. The program also benefits the juniors themselves, who have a better chance of mastering the material and strategies because they are placed in a position to teach it.

*Student Success Centers (SSCs)* are youth-led college access centers on multi-school campuses. Collaborations between community-based organizations and schools, the SSCs hire and train youth to provide early awareness and counseling support to students throughout the school<sup>7</sup>. Youth leaders conduct awareness workshops with 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, college application preparation workshops with 11<sup>th</sup> graders, and one-on-one support to seniors with the college search, application, and financial aid process. Youth

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<sup>7</sup> Currently there are three SSCs in New York City: Bushwick Campus high schools in collaboration with Make the Road NY, Franklin K. Lane Campus high schools in collaboration with Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, and Taft Campus high schools in collaboration with New Settlement Apartments.

Leaders who staff SSCs are specifically trained to help their peers to explore, understand, and access college by both supervising staff from their community-based organization and by Goddard Riverside's Options Institute. They participate in 7 weeks of summer training and weekly staff meetings. Through their work, Youth Leaders are often able to engage even the most reluctant students in the college process. As one student who used the SSC commented, "Everyone I have known who went down to the SSC, they changed their whole mindset. They enjoy the people down there." Another commented, "It's kind of easier to talk to your peers...if you constantly need help, you don't want to bother an adult."

The SSC model has influenced the development of a program through the New York City Department of Education's Office of Post-Secondary Readiness. Called *Youth Leadership for College Access*, the program is a pilot at transfer schools and YABC sites. Through the Learn to Work program, high school students are being trained to do work similar to the SSC Youth Leaders with their peers.

## Opportunities and Challenges

The above profiles begin to illustrate the promise in integrating youth leadership into college access programming. A few significant themes emerge that highlight both the strengths and challenges within the work:

### Strengths

- There is a positive *impact on college-going measures* for the students the Youth Leaders touch<sup>8</sup>.
- Youth leadership can help programs to be *more responsive* to the specific needs of youth, in part because youth speak one another's language in ways most adult staff cannot.
- Because of their integration in one another's social and academic lives, youth are simply *more accessible* to one another than are adult counselors. The ability to call or Facebook or text one another for support and grounded advice is unparalleled by anything an adult counselor can (or should) offer.
- Training and employing youth to take real roles on college access programming is *relatively low-cost*. Without replacing the critical role of adult staff, a cohort of youth can complement the work of a counselor for a fraction of the cost of another adult staff person.
- There is a measurable *impact on the Youth Leaders*<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, program evaluations show that increasing number of students in SSC schools are applying to college as well as being accepted to college. SSC s have successfully engaged students earlier in the college process and helped juniors to be "college-application ready" upon entering senior year. SSC s have helped students diversify the types of colleges they apply to with a particular increase in applications to private colleges, and have successfully increased the number of students applying for scholarships and Federal/State aid.

<sup>9</sup> Again, program evaluation shows that in one survey 67% of Youth Leaders reported that the experience made them more comfortable speaking in front of others; 88% reported feeling more comfortable representing their school; 71% reported being more likely to participate in school activities; and 80% reported feeling more comfortable talking with adults.

## Challenges

At the same time, there are a host of challenges to confront in integrating youth leadership into CBO and school-based programs:

- Programs require *appropriate training, support, and supervision* in order to ensure that youth leaders can effectively carry out their responsibilities. Without this in place, the experience may serve the youth leaders themselves well, but may not provide the same benefit to other students.
- Situations can become particularly *complicated if youth try to manage more than they should*, especially in terms of complex socio-emotional, financial and legal issues that may arise throughout the college process.
- It can be difficult for the youth leaders themselves to manage the demands of the work, as they can become *overwhelmed by their own college process*.
- *Not all school and CBO-staff are open* to the idea of investing time and resources into placing youth in leadership roles. Authentic youth leadership work requires a high level of trust and confidence in the abilities of young people.
- *CBOs require additional resources to bring Youth Leaders into the work*. CBOs report needing funding, training and strong school partners in order to take on this work.

In CARA's experience, the most effective way to convince school and CBO leaders of the potential within youth leadership is to provide opportunities for adults to see youth leadership for college access in action. As Allison Palmer, Director of the College Access Center for New Settlement Apartments, said:

*When I initially heard about [it], I was skeptical of the concept of high school students providing "college counseling services" to their peers. After working with the youth leaders, I now realize that with the proper support, training, and resources, these students are quite effective in guiding their peers through the college admissions process. Because of the peer-to-peer relationship, oftentimes peer counselors are able to reach students who traditional adult counselors have historically had difficulties reaching.*

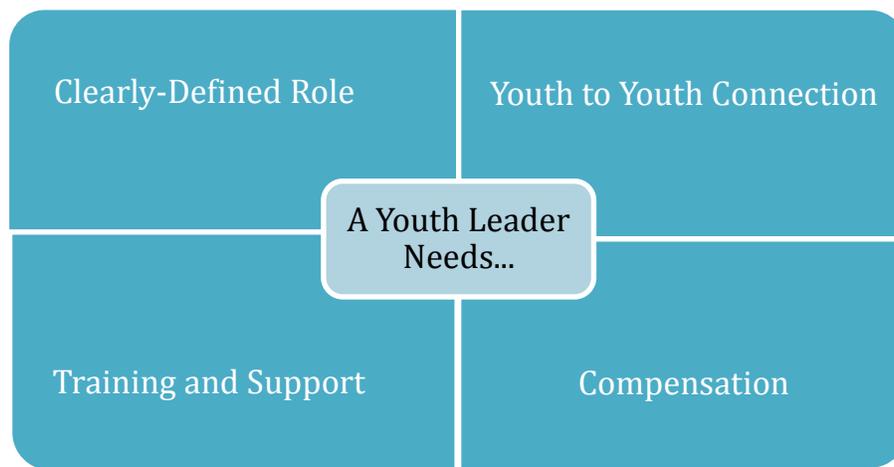
## **What Next? Expanding Youth Leadership for College Access**

### **I. Defining the Youth Leader Role**

At CARA, we have come to believe that it takes four key ingredients to develop a high quality College Access Youth Leadership Program:

1. *Clearly defined roles for Youth Leaders to play* – Youth Leaders need a clear and consistent job description, carefully articulated responsibilities, required work hours, and well-defined goals.
2. *Appropriate training and supervision* – Youth Leaders need to be trained in the relevant information about college; e.g. the application process, financial aid, counseling skills, event planning, etc. They also need careful and consistent adult supervision, a place to go with questions and challenges, and a consistent and strong peer support community for themselves.

3. *Opportunity for youth-to-youth connection* – Youth Leaders have a unique ability to reach other young people. They are not in place to do an adult’s job, but rather to use their lived experience as a base from which to connect and engage with their peers. They need the structures, including time and space within the school day or program schedule, in order to make critical connections to other young people.
4. *Meaningful compensation for work* – Youth Leaders need to believe and be told that their contribution is valuable. Depending on how much Youth Leaders are working – as well as school or CBO structures – this value can be demonstrated in the form of a paycheck or academic credit.



## II. Growing the Youth Leader Role

In our survey of peer organizations, 65% reported being *very interested* in further developing the role of school-age youth in their programs, with an additional 30% saying they were *somewhat interested* in this. In order to do this, 87% reported they would need *funding*, 70% that they would need *training*, 57% that they would need *organizational support* and 40% that they would need *school support*.

Among the organizations that expressed interest in developing, or further developing, the role of youth in their college access programming, there were several motivating factors. Some organizations are interested because they see this as an opportunity to create more leadership roles for youth, and are aware that many of the skills developed in these roles are critical for college success. Other organizations highlight the fact that they cannot meet the level of need within their schools, specifically helping students to complete the many necessary steps involved in the application and matriculation into college. They see youth leadership as a way to distribute support across more people. Finally, some organizations have a fundamental belief in the role youth can play with their peers.

All are compelling reasons, and we hope that our partners—schools, CBOs, intermediary organizations, funders, policy makers, youth and families—will join us in encouraging a growth of youth leadership in college access.

We see at least three critical next steps in promoting this work:

1. Bring more people to the work – The best way to convince people of the value is to bring them to the Youth Leaders. In addition to inviting people to existing programs, we think Youth Leaders and their adult partners and allies should be writing, presenting at conferences, and documenting their work;
2. Provide training for schools and CBOs– We have highlighted the necessity of good training for Youth Leaders. While many organizations highlighted in this report do their own training, the Goddard Options Institute is adding more youth leadership trainings each year and provides critical resources for setting youth leaders up for success. Additionally, The Brooklyn Community Foundation is funding CARA to lead a 2012 ‘Youth Leadership Training Institute’ for Brooklyn CBOs interested in developing this capacity;
3. Evaluate the work – While each organization evaluated its’ own programs, a large-scale, longitudinal evaluation of youth leadership would help to position the work for growth, and attract new allies.

As they seek ways to support the post-secondary aspirations of their students, schools and college access programs should not overlook young people as a resource. Youth leadership has proven to be highly effective in creating a way for students to help their peers gain access to college. Support for youth leadership in college access not only honors youth power, it also takes seriously the aspirations of more than 95 percent of high school students by transforming the college-going cultures of their high schools.

As a College Coach from the Bridge to College program observed:

*“What I realized is that most of the barriers to matriculation can be easily resolved, with a phone call or a visit, but the students need only a little coaching before they are able to imitate your example and do for themselves...I can run alongside them, almost literally, as these young people, with circumstance similar to my own, enter into a new area of academia and adulthood that demand independence and is propelled by self-advocacy.”*

## **For more information on the programs mentioned:**

Bridge to College - <http://caranyc.org/programs/bridge-to-college/>  
Brooklyn College Community Partnership - <http://thebccp.org/>  
College Bound Initiative - <http://www.ywln.org/collegebound-initiative>  
College Summit - <http://www.collegesummit.org/>  
Full Circle - <http://www.fullcircleeducation.org/>  
Goddard Options Institute - <http://goddard.org/our-programs/education-college-access/options-institute/>  
GraduateNYC! - <http://gradnyc.com/>  
Learn to Work Youth Leadership Initiative -  
<http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/AlternativesHS/LearningtoWork/default.htm>  
Red Hook Initiative – [www.rhcenter.org](http://www.rhcenter.org)  
Student Success Centers - <http://caranyc.org/programs/student-success-centers/>  
Strive for College - <http://www.striveforcollege.org/>  
YMCA of Greater New York - <http://www.ymcanyc.org/ymca-of-greater-new-york/teens/>

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