

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
OF
REPORT ON ASSOCIATE DEGREE
PROGRAMS AT JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

BY
THE PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY
COMMITTEE ON CRITICAL CHOICES

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I. Executive Summary

John Jay's decision to admit associate degree students to its criminal justice programs is a reflection of its commitment to the dual mission of providing excellence in education and educational access. As John Jay enters its fifth decade, the College community is engaging in a frank and open discussion about its associate degree programs and whether current offerings best serve John Jay students, New York City, and the criminal justice community. The goal of this document is to provide the College community with the background information necessary to examine these concerns.

Associate Degrees at John Jay College: A First Step Toward the Baccalaureate

John Jay's four Associate of Science programs are qualitatively distinct from traditional associate degree programs. Instead of offering terminal degrees in the area of criminal justice, John Jay's programs are designed primarily to prepare students for transition to a four-year course of study.

In fall 2004, 3,184 (or 26%) of John Jay's 12,059 undergraduates were designated as associate degree students. Of those students in two-year programs, 52% were enrolled in Police Studies, 43% in Criminal Justice, 2% in Correction Administration and 2% in Security Management.

Few students, however, apply to John Jay with the intention of pursuing an associate degree. In fact, only 13% of John Jay's fall 2004 enrollees applied directly for admission to the College's associate degree programs, even though 56% of entering freshmen were enrolled in the College's two-year programs.

Although associate degree students are required to take a series of sequenced specialized courses, of the 60 credits required for a two-year degree, between 21 and 35 are earned through the multidisciplinary general education requirements – the backbone of the College's liberal arts program. Not only are these courses a requirement for all undergraduates at the College, associate degree students at John Jay take their general education courses alongside baccalaureate degree students in the same classroom. Given this structure, many of those enrolled in two-year programs are not associate degree students in any meaningful sense, nor do they self-identify as such.

Of the associate degree students who entered the College in 2000, 40% transferred to a baccalaureate program within their first five years of study at the College.

Racial and Ethnic Representation at John Jay

Early in the College's history, only 10% of John Jay students were Black or Hispanic. Today, the majority of John Jay undergraduate students are members of traditionally underrepresented groups.

In fall 2004, Hispanic students represented 37% of undergraduates, while White and Black students comprised approximately equal shares of the population, at 29% and 28%, respectively.

Asians and Pacific Islanders made up 6%, and American Indians or Native Alaskans comprised less than 1%.

A larger percentage of traditionally underrepresented groups are enrolled in the College's associate degree programs. In fall 2004, 45% of students enrolled in associate degree programs were Hispanic, 28% were Black, 21% were White, 6% were Asian or Pacific Islander, and less than 1% were American Indian or Native Alaskan.

Academic Characteristics of Associate Degree Students:

1. Academic Preparedness

The academic profile of entering baccalaureate students differs significantly from that of entering associate degree students. For example:

- The mean high school average for baccalaureate degree students entering the College in fall 2004 was 79.3. For associate degree students entering that year, the mean high school average was 74.6.
- Approximately 82% of baccalaureate degree students entering the College in fall 2004 had high school averages at or above 75 as compared to 48% of associate degree students.
- In 2004, the combined mean SAT score of entering associate degree students was 809. The average score of the baccalaureate cohort was 932.
- In fall 2003, 82% of entering baccalaureate students, and 21% of entering associate degree students, passed all three CUNY Skills Assessment Tests on their first try. Approximately 0.3% of entering baccalaureate students, and 13% of entering associate degree students passed none of the tests.

2. Academic Performance

Although there have been significant gains in the academic performance of our associate degree students, there are still areas of concern. For example:

- Approximately one in every three associate degree students was placed on academic probation in fall 2004. The share of associate degree students on academic probation that year was almost three times as great as the share of baccalaureate degree students.
- From 1999 to 2004, the average GPA of baccalaureate students rose from 2.4 to 2.6, while the average GPA of associate degree students rose from 2.07 to 2.3.
- Roughly a third (32.6%) of all baccalaureate students enrolled at the College in fall 2004 had cumulative indices at or above a B average (3.0 GPA). The comparable statistic for associate degree students in fall 2004 was 16.2%. The largest share of associate degree students (32%) earned between a 2.0 and 2.49 GPA. For baccalaureate students, the greatest single share (30%) earned between a 2.5 and 2.9.

- Of the 81 John Jay associate degree students who took the CUNY Proficiency Exam (CPE) in spring 2005, 76.5% qualified for advanced course work. In comparison, 82.4% of the College's 1,316 baccalaureate degree students who took the exam passed.

Student Retention

The one-year retention rate of first time full time students at John Jay has increased significantly over the past decade. The 2004 one-year retention rate for associate degree students was 69% -- surpassing the CUNY-wide average.

Approximately 68% of associate degree freshman who entered the College in fall 1998 had not graduated and were no longer enrolled at CUNY after six years. The rate for the baccalaureate degree cohort was 44%.

Student Graduation Rates

The number of associate degrees conferred has steadily increased from 62 in 2002 to 126 in 2005. Approximately 75% of associate degrees awarded in 2004 were in Criminal Justice, 12% were in Police Studies, 7% in Correction Administration, and 6% in Security Management.

The overall six-year graduation rate for associate degree students who first enrolled at the College in fall 1997 was 18.5%, as compared to the CUNY average of 27%. Of these students:

- 3.6% graduated with an associate degree after six years. The CUNY-wide associate degree rate of graduation for this cohort was 19.1%. The CUNY comprehensive college rate of graduation was 9.5%.
- 15.5% graduated with a baccalaureate degree after six years. The CUNY-wide average for this cohort was only 8.4%. John Jay also outpaced the comprehensive colleges' 11.8% graduation rate for this cohort.

Approximately 36% of baccalaureate degree students entering John Jay in 1997 graduated within six years. Only 18.5% of associate degree students reached that goal within the same timeframe. Of the freshman admitted into the baccalaureate degree program in 1998, 35.5% graduated within six years as compared to 22.2% of associate degree students in that cohort. This gap in graduation rates has persisted for years.

Associate Degree Programs: Options and Alternatives

Any choice the College makes with regard to its associate degree programs will have a serious impact not only on the students who attend John Jay, but also on criminal justice education. Changes in programming may also have serious fiscal consequences for the College. To assist in the deliberations, the Advisory Committee has generated a number of options for the College community to consider:

- Keep the associate degree programs without changes.
- Keep the associate degree programs but enhance student services and academic support.
- Make programmatic changes to the associate degree programs.
- Raise the admissions standards for incoming associate degree students.
- Eliminate the associate degree program.

- Use the Baruch Model of affiliation agreements to influence the quality of criminal justice degree offerings at community colleges.

Conclusion

The decision about the future of John Jay College's associate degree program is clearly a decision with far-reaching consequences. Whichever option is pursued from those listed above – or others not included in this report – the future policy direction will reflect decisions about the kinds of students who should be admitted to the College, the support services that should be provided at the College, the relationship between John Jay and other institutions within CUNY, and the role of John Jay College in preparing students for careers in a wide variety of public service and private sector professions.