



Collaborative Programs
Research Report

*Understanding the Low Male Participation Rate
in College Now*

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Executive Summary

Understanding the Low Male Participation Rate in College Now

To investigate the factors that may contribute to a lower enrollment rate of male to female students in *College Now* courses, we conducted interviews of students and teachers from two large comprehensive high schools (Banner, or School #1, and National, or School #2) served by Kingsborough Community College's *College Now* program. Students and teachers were asked to describe the differences, if any, in how males and females relate to education, their high school and the *College Now* program. The perspectives of the seventeen students enrolled in both college credit and developmental (non-credit) sections of *College Now* courses were documented in small group interviews. In addition, five interviews were conducted with high school staff who teach *College Now* courses. We also considered how differences in students' and teachers' perspectives across the two schools may be related to differences in the two schools' demographic and educational outcome profiles. Systematic qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts resulted in nine findings based on two study questions.

Study Question #1:

Do males and females differ in relation to education and if so how?

Differences in Relation to Education in General

- **Finding #1.1:** Students characterized male and female educational engagement across a range of views, from having little or nothing to do with gender to stereotypical categorical contrasts. Males were described as taking less pride in their school work, “putting things off,” being more present-oriented, having less focus and impulse control, and being unable to handle conflicting responsibilities in order to get their schoolwork done. This was in contrast to females, who were described as caring about their school work, committed to going to college, and being more composed, mature and confident in general than their male counterparts.
- **Finding #1.2:** Both males and females at Banner referenced stereotypical types of male disengagement such as hanging out with friends and dropping out to pursue gang and drug involvement. However, males at Banner, like most interviewees at National who expressed an opinion, also spoke about gender-

neutral sources of disengagement: peer pressure, family background, personal choices, socioeconomics and community factors.

Study Question #2:

Do the high schools play a role in shaping male and female educational engagement, in general, and participation in *College Now*, specifically? If so, how?

The Role of Social Norms, Peer Pressure and Influence

- **Finding #1.3:** At Banner, females described feeling the pressure of stricter social norms for their behavior. Students of both sexes viewed males as having more alternatives to school than females, alternatives such as dropping out to get a GED or a job, pursuing a career in sports, or dealing drugs. Though female students resented having fewer alternatives due in part to more restrictive social norms, to an outside observer this may be seen as an enabling constraint which acts to keep them in school and focused on college. On the other hand, the alternatives for males seem either impractical or destructive.
- **Finding #1.4:** Both males and females at Banner described occasionally being ridiculed by some of their peers for doing well in school. Students at National reported that their peers were supportive of achievement, that competition exists among high achievers, and that discussing college-going was difficult around their less academically successful peers.

Recommendation: Share *College Now* data with instructors and guidance counselors on the rates of participation, successful outcomes, and postsecondary enrollments of males and females to better apprise them of the challenge.

Recommendation: Organize professional development activities for *College Now* instructors and guidance counselors to explore the social pressures males face that interfere with their educational engagement in general, often precluding their participation in *College Now*.

The Role of School Security and Discipline

- **Finding #2.1:** Strict school security (the presence of police, metal detectors and what are perceived to be patterns of overly strict or inconsistent discipline) might contribute to a de-motivating atmosphere at both schools. Getting through security may hinder students from getting to *College Now* classes on time.

Recommendation: Assess the impact security screening has on early morning access to the high school and student lateness in *College Now* courses and, if significant, discuss alternative security measures for *College Now* students with school leaders.

The Role of Peer Groups and Social Environment

- **Finding #2.2:** The schools were described both by students and teachers as having diffuse peer social groups with evidence of cross-racial friendships among both males and females. An academically focused “clique” of relatively high achievers (“top scholars” or “brightest bunch”) seemed to have a distinct identity at both schools and was comprised of *College Now* and non-*College Now* students of both sexes.
- **Finding #2.3:** *College Now* did not appear to play a role in social differentiation among students at either school. Since most students do not take *College Now* courses until their junior or senior year, the program does not seem to factor in students’ social identity. Furthermore, *College Now* students of both sexes described having friends who are both non-*College Now* participants and not doing as well academically.

Recommendation: Engage students in *College Now* courses on the issue of peer pressure and its relationship to academic disengagement in general with the goal of educating *College Now* students to become pro-academic role models in their school.

Attitudes toward College Now and Recruitment to the Program

Finding #2.4: For both males and females, *College Now* supplements decisions to go to college. For the most part, *College Now* students in sections of college credit and developmental courses planned to go to college even before they participated in the

program. Teacher interviewees confirmed how *College Now* plays this supplemental role. Student interviewees of both sexes understood the effort it takes to be in the program, and a few spoke of males, in general, as unwilling to make the necessary effort. All had good family and school support to go to college and had plans to go, though those interviewed in the lower grades had less firm ideas about where they wanted to go to college. Some students at both schools recognized the positive influence on their own college plans of associating with *College Now* students.

Recommendation: Increase student awareness of *College Now*—its goals and opportunities—beginning in 9th grade and recruit students, especially males, into various program activities (such as campus visits, film festivals, etc.) before 11th grade.

Recommendation: Increase the focus of advising, recruitment class presentations and student development course units on the relationship between high school performance, academic intensity, college and career outcomes, *College Now*, and *College Now* credit transferability.

- **Finding #2.5:** Recruitment to *College Now* courses took place in many ways. Some students responded to open calls and class presentations (*open-call recruitment*). Some students were encouraged by friends who were already participating in *College Now* (*collateral recruitment*). Students in honors or special academic programs were directly channeled into specific college credit *College Now* courses (*associational recruitment*). And guidance counselors and/or teachers sometimes invited students to take various courses for different reasons: those with good grades and attendance were invited to take college credit courses; those who needed preparation for the Regents' math and English tests were invited to take developmental courses; and some students were invited who were seen as likely to attend a CUNY college (*selective invitational recruitment*). Each of these methods had distinct effects and might directly or indirectly impact patterns of male enrollment.

Recommendation: Develop strategic recruitment plans for each school based on deep local knowledge and the coordination of school-based and *College Now* learning opportunities from 9th through 12th grades.

Recommendation: Track student recruitment through the KCC *College Now* student course survey and share the results with school administrators and *College Now* staff.

Recommendation: Expand the use of high school data to identify and reach out to students not in the program to discuss *College Now* learning opportunities appropriate to their academic development.

Recommendation: Discuss alternative scheduling of *College Now* courses with DOE and school leaders in order to enroll more males who would otherwise find it difficult to get to school early.

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Stuart Cochran, Principal Investigator
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Introduction

In 1984, Kingsborough Community College established the first *College Now* program in partnership with four Brooklyn high schools. In the late 1990s, as The City University of New York (CUNY) moved forward with the full implementation of its new policies eliminating the admission of students needing remediation to the baccalaureate degree programs, the University leadership decided to expand *College Now* (which, by then, had also been established at LaGuardia) to all of its community colleges. In 2000, CUNY and the New York City Board of Education made a joint commitment to making *College Now* a system-wide program for both institutions. Since that time, *College Now* has grown to be the University's major collaboration with the New York City secondary school system. Its defining goals are to help students meet high school graduation requirements and prepare for success in college.

College Now offers qualified high school students the opportunity to take developmental and college credit courses. Most courses are taught at the high schools by high school teachers appointed as adjunct faculty members. In recent years an increasing number of CUNY colleges have decided to offer sections of college credit courses on their campus. In addition to dedicated sections of courses on campus for *College Now* students, hundreds of students also register each year for undergraduate courses taught on the campuses, where they are in the same sections as matriculated college students. In the 2005 – 2006 academic year, the program enrolled more than 31,500 students from 287 participating high schools in over 52,000 courses and activities. In fall 2005, more than 16,800 students from the New York City public schools entered CUNY as first-time freshman and almost 40% of those students had taken at least one *College Now* course.

College Now faces a challenge in enrolling a proportionate number of males in the program. Consistently since 2002, males account for just over 36% of student enrollments in sections of college credit *College Now* courses across the University (Table 1). The gender participation gap is widest for blacks and Hispanics. In the case of college credit enrollments by black students, males only account for around 30% over this time period. Among Hispanics, this number is approximately 33%.

| Table 1 Percentage of Enrollments in Sections of College Credit College Now Courses Excluding the College of Staten Island Discovery Institute Program* by Race/Ethnicity and Gender: 2001-2002 to 2005-2006 | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|
| | 2001-2002 | | 2002-2003 | | 2003-2004 | | 2004-2005 | | 2005-2006 | |
| | Female | Male |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Black | 68.8 | 31.2 | 70.3 | 29.7 | 71.2 | 28.8 | 69.8 | 30.2 | 70.4 | 29.6 |
| White | 57.7 | 42.3 | 57.8 | 42.2 | 57.4 | 42.6 | 58.8 | 41.2 | 57.4 | 42.6 |
| Hispanic | 65.6 | 34.4 | 67.4 | 32.6 | 66.6 | 33.4 | 66.9 | 33.1 | 66.7 | 33.3 |
| Asian | 57.2 | 42.8 | 57.5 | 42.5 | 57.8 | 42.2 | 59.6 | 40.4 | 56.3 | 43.7 |
| Other | 64.6 | 35.4 | 68.5 | 31.5 | 62.8 | 37.2 | 61.5 | 38.5 | 65.9 | 34.1 |
| Am Ind | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 75.0 | 25.0 | 58.8 | 41.2 |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | |

Source: College Now Program
*Program enrollments from CSI are excluded in this table due to the nature of students' program participation

Encouragingly, a gender imbalance is far less pronounced in the percentage of successful completions (those receiving a C or above) in college credit *College Now* courses (Table 2). For the 2004-2005 school year, the percentage of males successfully completing college credit *College Now* courses is only 2.8% lower than females. This number drops below 1% in the 2005-2006 school year. It should be noted, however, that there are pronounced differences within and across race/ethnicity categories by gender.

| Table 2 Percentage of Successful Completions in College Credit College Now Courses Excluding The College of Staten Island Discovery Institute Program* by Race/Ethnicity and Gender: 2001-2002 to 2005-2006 | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|-------|
| | 2001-2002 | | 2002-2003 | | 2003-2004 | | 2004-2005 | | 2005-2006 | |
| | Female | Male |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Black | 59.9 | 59.0 | 70.1 | 63.6 | 74.6 | 68.3 | 73.8 | 69.4 | 77.0 | 73.4 |
| White | 82.7 | 78.1 | 86.1 | 85.4 | 89.6 | 86.0 | 89.6 | 86.3 | 88.6 | 87.3 |
| Hispanic | 66.1 | 59.8 | 66.5 | 64.7 | 75.4 | 71.3 | 74.5 | 70.4 | 76.9 | 75.5 |
| Asian | 77.2 | 76.1 | 83.4 | 82.3 | 87.1 | 83.6 | 87.3 | 83.1 | 89.3 | 88.5 |
| Other | 70.9 | 73.5 | 77.1 | 74.5 | 83.7 | 81.3 | 85.1 | 78.2 | 87.9 | 82.0 |
| Am Ind | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 55.6 | 66.7 | 90.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 70.6 | 69.6 | 76.0 | 75.4 | 81.4 | 78.8 | 81.2 | 78.4 | 82.7 | 81.9 |

Source: College Now Program
*Program enrollments from CSI are excluded in this table due to the nature of students' program participation.

Many educational policy makers and practitioners at the local, state and national levels are actively exploring ways to increase the high school graduation and college attendance of males. Some are looking towards dual enrollment or credit-based transition programs, of which CUNY's *College Now* is a unique type, for possible ways to increase the representation of males in higher education. High schools have long offered rigorous college preparatory curricula and advanced learning opportunities such as Advanced Placement, but these have tended to be focused on high achieving

students in schools serving middle and upper middle class students. *College Now*, on the other hand, is intended to offer an appropriate range of college-sponsored learning activities for a wide variety of high school students. It is especially committed to creating and providing opportunities for those students who are not necessarily considered to be on the college track.

To inform recruitment and program development so that more males may be served by *College Now*, better understanding is needed as to why they are not availing themselves of this experience. To date, no qualitative research has been conducted on males' disproportionately low enrollments in dual enrollment programs, either nationally or at CUNY. This study, designed and conducted by the research and evaluation staff of CUNY's Collaborative Programs, was undertaken to begin to address this gap. Through a qualitative study consisting of interviews of students and *College Now* instructors complemented with program enrollment and outcomes data, we explore the issue of male disengagement in high school with a particular focus on *College Now*. What follows is a brief outline of existing research pertinent to this study, an overview of the study and study questions, the research sites and participants, an analysis of the findings and emergent themes, and a conclusion with recommendations and directions for further research.

Study Overview

Understanding Male Disengagement from Education

Nationally and at CUNY, males attend, persist at and graduate from college at lower rates than females. While significant gaps in postsecondary participation remain across racial groups, males within each group lag behind their female counterparts by roughly the same percentage. In 2003, 8% fewer white males participated in postsecondary education than their female counterparts (NCES 2005). This figure was 10.5% for black males and 12% for Hispanic males.

The lower percentages of postsecondary enrollment for males within and across racial groups are partially due to the cumulative effects of their disengagement along the way to college. Even before reaching college, significant numbers of males drop out of high school. This cumulative effect is more pronounced for males of color. For the class of 2003 nationally, 59% and 58% of black and Hispanic females graduated high school respectively (Greene and Winters 2006). For black and Hispanic males, the percentage graduating was 48% and 49% respectively. This pattern is more pronounced for urban school districts like New York City's. Whereas 43% of black females and 37% of Hispanic females graduated in 2003 from New York City high schools, 33% and 30% of their black and Hispanic male counterparts did so. By contrast, 54% and 56% of white and Asian males and 65% and 61% of white and Asian females graduated in 2003. These higher high school graduation rates for whites and Asians are reflected in their overall higher postsecondary participation.

Male disengagement from education in comparison to females is a very durable phenomenon with complex and intersecting sources. It is most pronounced in urban areas where families disproportionately live in poverty due in large part to the decline of job opportunities for those without higher education. Poverty is strongly associated with low educational attainment, for youth and this association is more pronounced for males and even more so for males of color. Low average family socioeconomic status (SES) may also be due to the absence of two parents, most often fathers, who typically have higher earning potential. Single parent families are associated with lower quality of supervision (single parents may work long hours and perhaps at night) and residential disruption. These features of poverty make it difficult for parents to inculcate pro-academic and pro-social norms in their children. The attraction of immediate and illicit economic opportunities

such as selling drugs can have a powerful effect, pulling youth away from normative pathways which involve education. Statistically, far more males than females are recruited by and attracted to gangs and drug networks. Such opportunities afford immediate gratification in terms of money and status for youth, which outweigh both the risks associated with such activity as well as the long-term sacrifices needed to succeed in education and the labor market.

Some research implicates the social, cultural, pedagogical and organizational environments of schools in male academic disengagement. One social feature of schools that researchers suggest plays a significant role in male disengagement is peer pressure, which is more pronounced among students from poor and working class backgrounds (Willis 1997) and males of color (Austin-Smith and Freyer 2005; Ferguson 2001; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; McWhorter 2001). Early research on the effects of peer pressure among males suggests that they adopt oppositional and resistive attitudes towards school in order to avoid the ridicule from peers that academic success invites. For males of color, this is translated into the “burden of acting white” (Fordham and Ogbu 1986). Later research, however, finds that a school’s level of racial integration and cross-racial friendships can alter the dynamics of this pressure. Freyer and Torelli (2005) find that this burden does not exist in schools that have over 80% minority students, in schools with strong self-segregation or in private schools. The implication here is that peer group formations and peer pressures are different in different types of schools. However, using the same dataset, Moody (2002) finds that the number of cross-racial friendships – a probable sign of an absence of this burden for minority students – decreases with schools’ racial heterogeneity.¹ As racial heterogeneity increases, so does the intensity of social sanctions for crossing racial-boundaries. Thus, racial heterogeneity may be a more salient factor in inter-group segregation and peer pressure, particularly for minority male students, than simply the aggregate percentage of minority students in a school.

Mickelson (2001) also finds that low SES minority youth are further demotivated by the fact that “efforts in school often do not have the same outcomes for members of their group as do similar efforts for members of socially dominant groups” (45). Despite their expressed interest in high academic achievement, minority students, again particularly males, feel that the return on their investment is not worth the sacrifice. This leads to de-motivation and a lack of commitment to education for minority students and males in particular.

Some urban schools may react to resistive, oppositional and disengaged

students by developing ways of pushing them out. This may involve strategies as passive as neglect to more active approaches involving labeling, profiling and disciplinary action, but whatever the case males of color are disproportionately affected (Bowditch 1993; Rist 1977; Simmons et al. 2001; Skiba et al. 1997). As a result of her study of middle school males' transition to high school, Roderick (2003) concludes that "these students' day-to-day experiences in school undermined academic engagement and performance, by which adults' reaction to difficulties ranged from neglect to rejection, and by which students' own coping mechanisms, in the absence of any adult guidance and within environments of weak academic structure and norms, undermined their performance" (578). It is with these complex issues in mind that this study seeks to examine students' and teachers' views on the issue of male disengagement in two schools with particular emphasis on their low participation rates in the *College Now* program.

Study Questions, Research Sites and Participants

We undertook this study in fall 2005 with two guiding questions:

- 1) Do males and females differ in relation to education, and if so, how?
- 2) Do the high schools play a role in shaping male and female educational engagement, in general, and participation in *College Now*, specifically? If so, how?

To address these questions, we sought the insights of males and females enrolled in both developmental and college credit *College Now* courses in two large public high schools in New York City served by Kingsborough Community College's *College Now* program. We call these schools Banner and National. While the *College Now* program offers courses in a range of subjects, we chose to recruit students for the small group interviews enrolled in two non-credit developmental courses and two college credit courses offered at both schools. Each of these courses enrolled a similar number of students at both schools. We sought the perspectives of both male and female students in the belief that both could offer insights into the issue of differential program participation by sex.

Banner and National were chosen as study sites for reasons of comparison and contrast.² They are similar in three major features of comprehensive New York City high schools: large student enrollments, high percentages of minority students,

and rates of over-capacity (about 25% at the time of the study).³ Each school also had longstanding and extensive *College Now* programs in partnership with Kingsborough Community College offering a nearly identical range of *College Now* courses from which we could recruit small groups of students to interview. The two schools were also similar in terms of one feature we had not anticipated: both had relatively high numbers of incidents reported to the police during the year of our study when compared to other city schools of a similar size.

Despite these similarities, the two schools differed on a number of demographic and academic indicators that are usually, though not always, correlated in aggregate school data. These differences also extend to *College Now* participation by males and females within and across racial categories. A comparison of basic descriptive statistics of interest between these two schools is presented in Appendix A. The *College Now* program's interest in enrolling more males is served by a better understanding of how differences in any particular high school may shape differences in participation. An examination of publicly available data from the New York City Department of Education and archival data from the *College Now* program and the City University of New York results in the following differences in demographic makeup and educational outcomes for both of these schools as they relate to male engagement:

- *Attrition:* Male attrition at both schools is very high. By the 11th and 12th grades, females outnumbered males at Banner by 10% in 2004-2005. By contrast, the male/female ratio of 11th and 12th graders at National is nearly 50/50 due to the fact that more males entered this school as ninth graders in prior years than at Banner. The lower number of males available to be recruited into the *College Now* program in these grades at Banner may have resulted in the lowered participation rate at this school when compared to National. Further, males of color left before graduation at markedly higher rates at National than at Banner, which may have something to do with their significantly lower participation rate in the program (Table 3).

Table 3
Estimated Persistence of Students from the 9th Grade in 2002-2003 and 2001-2002 to 11th and 12th Grades Respectively at Banner and National High Schools by Race/Ethnicity and Sex*

| | Estimated Percentage of 9 th Grade (2002-2003) Students Who Persisted to 11 th Grade in 2004-2005 | | Estimated Percentage of 9 th Grade (2001-2002) Students Who Persisted to 11 th Grade in 2004-2005 | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| | Females | Males | Females | Males |
| National | | | | |
| Black | 30.9 | 28.8 | 36.6 | 29.4 |
| White | 47.1 | 49.8 | 52.5 | 52.6 |
| Hispanic | 30.0 | 33.9 | 40.9 | 36.6 |
| Asian | 61.6 | 43.5 | 46.9 | 50.8 |
| Banner | | | | |
| Black | 55.8 | 45.8 | 52.3 | 49.6 |
| White | 48.6 | 40.6 | 40.7 | 40.1 |
| Hispanic | 49.3 | 42.8 | 37.8 | 37.7 |
| Asian | 60.4 | 66.2 | 66.1 | 48.8 |

* While a good deal of movement in and out of both of these schools at the different grade levels can be assumed (both schools have over 90% stability for 2005, with National slightly higher than Banner), this offers a rough estimate of the rate of attrition across genders and these two schools.
 Source: NYCDOE Office of Statistical Summaries.

Table 4
Enrollment of Graduates From National and Banner High Schools at CUNY Fall 2005 by College Now Participation, Gender, and Degree

| | Female | | | | | | Male | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| | AA/AS | | BA | | Total | | AA/AS | | BA | | Total | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| National | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Non-College Now | 28 | 77.8 | 8 | 22.2 | 36 | 36.4 | 18 | 75.0 | 6 | 25.0 | 24 | 29.6 |
| College Now | 26 | 41.3 | 37 | 58.7 | 63 | 63.6 | 26 | 45.6 | 31 | 54.4 | 57 | 70.4 |
| Total | 54 | 54.5 | 45 | 45.5 | 99 | 100.0 | 44 | 54.3 | 37 | 45.7 | 81 | 100.0 |
| Banner | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Non-College Now | 33 | 71.7 | 13 | 28.3 | 46 | 39.3 | 16 | 53.3 | 14 | 46.7 | 30 | 42.9 |
| College Now | 47 | 66.2 | 24 | 33.8 | 71 | 60.7 | 24 | 60.0 | 16 | 40.0 | 40 | 57.1 |
| Total | 80 | 68.4 | 37 | 31.6 | 117 | 100.0 | 40 | 57.1 | 30 | 42.9 | 70 | 100.0 |

Source: College Now Program; CUNY Office of Institutional Research

- *College Now Participation:* As a percentage of *College Now* registrations, males enrolled in fewer numbers at Banner than at National (44% vs. 50%) and had a lower percentage of successful completions than their female counterparts. At National, the percentage of successful completions for males was nearly identical to that of females. Qualitative evidence collected suggests that males at National were recruited from a special academic program to *College Now* courses in a related subject area (Appendix A, Table 9).
- *CUNY-Going:* Banner males had the lowest fall 2005 CUNY-going rate (32%) when compared to Banner females or National males or females. National males had the next lowest (38%). As a proportion of students entering degree programs at CUNY, males from Banner enrolled in Baccalaureate degree programs at a slightly lower percentage than their counterparts from National (43% vs. 46%) (Table 4).
- *College Now Participation of CUNY-Goers:* Males from Banner who enrolled in CUNY in 2005 participated in *College Now* at the lowest rate (43%) when compared to Banner females or National males or females. Males from National who enrolled in CUNY in 2005 had the highest *College Now* participation rate of these four subgroups (70%) (Table 4).

Data Collection

In all, six groups of *College Now* participants were organized—three at National and three at Banner— with one of each of the following types at both schools: all male, all female and mixed gender. A fourth small group interview conducted at Banner consisted of three males who had not participated in the program. We were unable to recruit a similar group of non-participants at National due to a lack of student cooperation paired with other logistical factors. The lower number of students recruited at National plays a role in an imbalance of material available for analysis and comparisons across schools. In addition, we had hoped to recruit between six to eight students for each group type at each high school but fell short of this number. We recruited a total of 21 students across all groups, short of the 48-student minimum we had intended. (See Appendix B for a summary of the original research plan and details on the students recruited for the small group interviews.)

Since our interviewees each had made the commitment to participate in *College Now* and had plans to go to college, they can all be described as academically motivated, though their academic averages were likely to range a fair amount. Interviewees provided insightful perspectives in general on how they see males and females differing on issues of concern to us. We also explore differences between interviewees' perspectives by high school, to the extent possible, to ascertain how different contexts might be playing a role in academic engagement, particularly with respect to *College Now*. We should note, however, in presenting such by-school differences that we did not set out to conduct school case studies, and our efforts to tease out such differences from the reports of students and teachers should be considered provisional at best. In addition to our student groups, we individually interviewed three female and two male *College Now* instructors employed at the high schools. One male and one female worked as guidance counselors and the others were teachers. We solicited their perspectives on gender, academic engagement and motivation for both *College Now* and non-*College Now* students.

Our research protocol was approved by the CUNY-wide Institutional Review Board and the NYC Department of Education Proposal Review Committee, and we had the permission of college and *College Now* officials, the school principals and regional superintendents to conduct these studies. Student participants were recruited in a voluntary manner with completed parental consents. Small group

interviews and teacher interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, and all participants have been given a pseudonym. No individually identifiable information is presented in this report.

Findings and Analysis

Results from the small group interviews are organized by the main study questions and emergent themes. Attention is also given to additional themes and sub-themes that emerged during the course of the analysis of transcripts.

Study Question #1:

Do males and females differ in relation to education and if so how?

Differences in Relation to Education in General

- **Finding #1.1:** Students characterized male and female educational engagement across a range of views, from having little or nothing to do with gender to stereotypical categorical contrasts. Males were described as taking less pride in their school work, “putting things off,” being more present-oriented, having less focus and impulse control, and being unable to handle conflicting responsibilities in order to get their schoolwork done. This was in contrast to females, who were described as caring about their school work, committed to going to college, and being more composed, mature and confident in general than their male counterparts.
- **Finding #1.2:** Both males and females at Banner referenced stereotypical types of male disengagement such as hanging out with friends, and dropping out to pursue gang and drug involvement. However, males at Banner, like most interviewees at National who expressed an opinion, also spoke about gender-neutral sources of disengagement: peer pressure, family background, personal choices, socioeconomics or community factors.

In what follows, we unpack several specific themes about how males and females relate to education and their plans and preparation for college across the two schools. We also examine interviewees’ perspectives on the sources of these differences. Table 5 (p. 14) summarizes the differences between males and females from our interviews.

Students in our small groups of both sexes characterized females as generally

putting more effort into their schoolwork and focusing more on getting through high school in order to go to college and get a job. Speaking from his experience, David at National explains that his female peers take more pride than males in how a class project looks for presentation:

I think they see more pride in their work...I have different classes in which the females and guys have to do projects, homework, everything, and it tends to be that the women take more effort into doing their work. ... [W]hen they present, they do it more thoroughly. I'm not making a correlation or anything, it's just that I tend to see it in my classes.⁴

David may equivocate about the correlation between sex and increased attention to the quality of class presentations, but he nonetheless offers the observation as worthy of mention. Perhaps this increased effort on the part of females has something to do with their ability to handle various pressures, as noted by a student in a group at Banner:

Brooke: [They're] able to think more, when they're underneath a whole lot of pressure. I think females are able to take pressure more than males, 'cause they have to deal with peer pressure at school and then work and then schoolwork . . . [It's] hard [for males] to juggle it around.

| Table 5 Gender-Specific Differences in Educational Engagement Reported by Interviewees | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Males | Source | Females | Source |
| Quality of schoolwork not a priority | David/National Ken/National Ms. Lowell/Banner | Care about quality of schoolwork | David/National Ken/National |
| Instant gratification (sports, video games, making money, drugs) | Dominique/Banner Warren/Banner Ziad/National | Delayed gratification (get a college degree, make good money, provide for children) | Ziad/National Diana/National |
| Unable to handle multiple responsibilities | Brooke/Banner Calvin/Banner | Able to handle multiple responsibilities | Brooke/Banner Calvin/Banner |
| Weak work ethic | Ms. Lowell/Banner | Good work ethic | Ms. Lowell/Banner |
| Unfocused/non-committal/Unmotivated | Ms. Lowell/Banner Brooke/Banner | Focused/committed/Motivated to succeed | |
| Immature | Calvin/Banner Brooke/Banner | Mature | Brooke/Banner |
| Find it difficult to deal with authority | Mr. Franklin/Banner | Can deal with authority | Mr. Franklin/Banner |
| Self-sufficient | Antoine/Banner Alisha/Banner Brooke/Banner | Integrated | |
| Low impulse control | Ms. Bridgers/National Ms. Cruthers/National | Self-controlled | Ms. Cruthers/National |
| Repeat mistakes | Dominique/Banner | Learn from mistakes | Dominique/Banner Brooke/Banner |
| Lacking same sex role models | Calvin/Banner Ms. Lowell/Banner Mr. Franklin/Banner | Mothers involved in education (ex. PTA) | |
| Subject to peer pressure (to fail, to act out, to resist) | Ms. Cruthers/National Antoine/Banner | Subject to high expectations (i.e. societal norms, parents) | |
| Cutting Class | Mr. Townsend/Banner | | |
| Poor school attendance | | Good school attendance | |

Calvin, who participated with Brooke in the mixed-gender focus group at Banner, also describes females as able to “handle more than one thing at a time, and they’re more mature than guys.”

Interviewees of both sexes at Banner characterized females as being more future-oriented and males more focused on the present. In terms of preparing for college while in high school, Warren puts it this way: “[g]uys ... deal with something when it comes up. Females ... know it’s coming.” Part of the characterization of males as present-oriented has to do with their interests in sports, video games, “messing around” with friends, and cultivating a reputation—activities with short-term payoffs that compromise their attention to academics. Joey, in the same group as Warren, reported that “... what I’ve seen. . . from my friends and

everything — the females go to class and everything, while the guys are just walking around and having fun instead of going to class.” Again, we have an example of a male resisting a categorical position on the difference between males and females, though nonetheless noticing a difference anecdotally.

While the males we interviewed at Banner described females as having an increased focus on their education, they also mentioned the role of gender-neutral forces as shaping students’ (dis)engagement in a way not present in Banner females’ accounts (see Table 6, p. 16). One gender-neutral source of individual differences offered by Banner males was how and when students choose *the good way* or *the bad way*. Matteo told us that “[e]very year [in high school], you get more experience. But then you get to junior year like realizing that, if you were with the ones who get to *the good way* or *the bad way*, it’s a decision” (emphasis added). For Matteo, this choice is clearly influenced by who one associates with. Associating with peers who are academically focused (i.e. those who choose *the good way*) is a way to insulate oneself from peer pressure. In essence, the decision about who to have as friends strongly determines which *way* one takes. This issue of peer pressure will be expanded on further in the next section.

Without attributing this choice-making to one or the other gender, Warren improvises on Matteo’s point:

Usually the *easy way* is taking the classes that require the least writing and the least thinking. And *the harder way*, which is usually more rewarding is, you know, waking up early, getting to class on time, doing all your work that way. In the end, you have less to do. Usually, the easy way, you wind up working all four years of high school, [but] if you get things done earlier, by the time you’re a senior, you have like four classes and you actually can enjoy being a senior.

Warren clearly understands the benefits of delayed gratification (i.e. an easy senior year) and he articulates this without attribution to gender. In answer to the interviewer’s question “Do you think that in general men and women work just as hard as each other in high school?” Matteo responds, “Well, for me, it all depends on the person. If a person wants to study really hard, they want to be good in the future; they want to be successful.” Joey concurs with Matteo: “Like you said, it has to depend on the person if they enjoy doing the work and paying attention.”

Calvin also attributes a difference in students’ academic goals to the degree of family support:

[A]s much as boys out there that don't really have any parents that [care about] their education, there's also some girls like that. Statistically, it is more boys than girls, of course. But I mean, there's a handful of boys, guys that do have goals.

| Table 6 Gender-Neutral Sources of Differences in Educational Engagement Reported by Interviewees | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Feature | Source |
| Upbringing | Arthur/National Calvin/Banner Ben/National |
| Family pressure to do well | Ben/National Brooke/Banner Antoine/Banner |
| Delayed Gratification | Arthur/National |
| Foregoing college to work | David/National |
| Individual choice (e.g. to be successful) | Joey/Banner Matteo/Banner |

Calvin implies that the effect of unsupportive parenting is equally detrimental to males and females. And, though he also states that the balance is tipped towards males, he implies that males can still develop goals despite these circumstances.

Banner teachers also mention family situations that affect male education. The guidance counselor, Mr. Franklin, reports that “some of those students tell me they’re living with grandmothers, because both parents have died, or are in jail, and then there’s no involvement in a lot of cases by male figures in their lives, by biological fathers who are not on the scene or not involved.” Citing research she recently read, Ms. Lowell, who teaches a developmental course at Banner, also told us: “One of the other problems that males face is that one-third of the children are raised without fathers. It’s been shown that males need men ... they don’t have it in terms of fathers.”

Like their Banner female students, the three *College Now* instructors at that school expressed strong views on the differences between males and females. These teachers described females as more focused and college bound and males as more immature, choosing “to put things off” and unwilling to wake up early enough to get to *College Now*. Ms. Lowell described males as not considering what their “expectations” are: “they don’t know what they’re going to do with their futures.” She sees more females with a “better work ethic” and “a clear focus, a clear intent, on their plans, their graduation status, the status of their credits, what they plan on

doing in the future.” She described males, on the other hand, as “lacking motivation” and “wanting to live for the moment in terms of sports and video games.”

When probed for the sources of these differences, Mr. Franklin—the Banner guidance counselor—pointed to a wider anti-social orientation that he sees young males adopting for the sake of popularity but to the detriment of their academic futures:

[T]here’s some kind of subculture that’s out there now, that if you’re a tough guy, a thug...have that type of image ... a gangster ... not only are you attractive to the females, but you can also fit into a category and that category has nothing to do with school, as far as learning. You’re here in the building, but you might as well be in the ... shopping mall. Because that’s what the hallways become, *just a walking place* [emphasis added].

The counselor describes males who adopt this attitude as carrying it with them no matter where they are. As a result, school hallways become merely places to display cultural identities. Males, who present themselves as gangsters either through attitude, demeanor or clothing, risk being labeled as dangerous and profiled by school staff and security (see finding 2.1, p. 29). They are in school because the law requires them to be there, but in effect they are internal dropouts. Marcos derides this culture at National: “A lot of guys here think that they’re tough guys; they like to show off. I don’t respect that. You know, you don’t have to say ‘yeah, I’m a tough guy.’”

Banner *College Now* instructors intimated that male physicality and difficulties with authority contributed to males’ alienation from school. In terms of physicality, Ms. Lowell referred to an article in *Ebony* she had recently read about black males and dropouts:

Males prefer moving around; the first thoughts, they prefer video games. Males can’t sit still as well as females in the early stages. It’s suggested that schools plan some more recess in the earlier grades. Males are more fidgety. At age three, one out of three males has been expelled from nursery school.

Mr. Franklin also refers to social and cultural forces but further suggests that innate biological differences make males less focused than females:

Interviewer: So why do you think ... women end up being a little more driven or focused?

Mr. Franklin: I think it has to do with a couple of things, or rather a few things. It probably has to do with what's going on with the socialization of children. . . . [and] with cultural issues, where males are just involved in other types of activities than females. . . . [I]t probably has to do with some biological issues, just talking about ...how guys are wired to do other things than what females do.

Students at National did not speak as much about gender differences in terms of academic engagement and goals as their (mostly female) counterparts at Banner. In response to the interviewer's question, "[W]ould you say men and women work equally hard in school?" Diana replies, "Yeah, they each work equally hard." When students at National discussed differences in male and female life goals, they spoke in highly conditional terms, as Ben does here:

Depends on how you were brought up. To know that you might not have a future, you don't have higher goals, like their families are not pushing them harder, . . . not telling them. . . you have to get an education. . . . They won't have as much [success] as the person whose family is pushing them.

In contrast to the Banner teachers we interviewed, one of the two National teachers said she did not see differences between males and females either in their relationship to education or their long term plans. Consider the following exchange:

Interviewer: Do you think in general boys and girls have the same kind of goals and expectations as students in this high school?

Ms. Bridgers: So far, I would say yes. I think a lot of them have aspirations to go to college and I think that ... my impression has been about the same. I have a lot of students asking me for college recommendations, and I would say it's pretty equal, boys to girls.

The other National *College Now* teacher in our study did describe differences in male and female behavior. Consider her description of classes where there is a predominance of males:

Interviewer: Do you think there are different styles of learning or interacting with teachers in general?

Ms. Cruthers: Oh, yeah. I definitely do. I don't know if I can place it on gender. As a teacher, and I do have experience as a teacher, every class has their own

personality. And the classes that you have—I've had class where there's been a majority of boys. And they were uncontrollable. The testosterone was flowing, I don't know what. But they bounce off of one another, and it's very hard to really teach a lesson in the way that you want to teach very often, and girls are not that way. If you have a majority of girls in a class, it's a very different thing.

While some males at Banner noted differences in terms of not caring about their work, playing around with friends, and having long terms goals, they resisted a deterministic or categorical stance. Calvin, like his peers Joey, Warren and Matteo in a different small group at Banner, emphasizes sex-neutral sources of students' different academic engagements. This stands in contrast to the Banner females and *College Now* instructors, who were more categorical in their descriptions of differences. That these males at Banner tend to implicate gender-neutral sources of academic (dis)engagement may have something to do with their own particular viewpoint as academically motivated males. They may resist such classifications because it would be a betrayal of their own experiences.

The Role of Social Norms, Peer Pressure and Influence

- **Finding #1.3:** At Banner, females described feeling the pressure of stricter social norms for their behavior. Students of both sexes viewed males as having more alternatives to school than females, alternatives such as dropping out to get a GED, going to work, pursuing a career in sports, or dealing drugs. Though female students resented having fewer alternatives, to outside observers it seems many male alternatives are impractical or destructive and the more restrictive social norms for females act as enabling constraints to keep them in school and focused on college.

Students in our small groups also gave us their opinions about the sources of difference in male and female educational engagement. In a group of Banner students, one source of the difference in the relative lack of commitment to education on the part of males was attributed to the number of perceived alternatives to school available to them, alternatives females were quick to point out they lacked. Among those mentioned were gang and drug-related activities.

Dominique: ... gangs and gang-related stuff is what takes their mind over, 'cause I know mad [read: very] smart people [males] who's just in gangs. Like if you go back into their history, let's say junior high school, they probably had good grades at one point of their life, but once they got to high school, or once they got to junior high school, they started to see new light; they're gonna go take the *wrong path* [emphasis added].

Antoine at Banner also expresses first-hand experience with this transformation among some of his male neighborhood acquaintances as they move from junior high to high school age:

But, there are some guys ... where I live, they don't go to school anymore. Like, after junior high, I went to the same junior high school with them, they went to high school for a few weeks, and then after that, you don't see them at school anymore. They just stay at home, they go, they *handle their business* [emphasis added].

Some males might go down the *wrong path* in order to *handle their business*. Others may see opting out of high school to take the GED tests as a more plausible route to work than female students:

Brooke: And I hear ... even freshman kids talking about taking the GED— freshman males. They want to take the GED, and I'm like, OK, instead of finishing high school, you want to go and take the GED?

How do Banner females talk about these “male” alternatives to school? Many refer specifically to social norms that shape different non-school opportunities, norms that are more lenient for males and more restrictive for females. They intimate that these norms prohibit women from “taking advantage” or pursuing such alternatives as sports, gangs and drugs. Here Dominique complains that

females go through different things [than males. . . ;] you can't be on the street. . . you know how the society make it seem like [OK] if a boy go out with mad [read: many] people, but if a girl do it, she called a 'ho'; male's called a 'man.' Society makes us seem like that. So everything is harder for us. Whatever a boy can do, if we do it, we're gonna have a bad name for it. They have an *upper hand* for it [emphasis added].

Alisha in the same small group concurs:

But you see, for us females, we know, like we don't really know what life is about, but for the males, I'm not saying it's good, but they think it's easier for them than for us 'cause they could just go on the street corner and sell some weed; they could hustle. But we females, we can't go out there and present ourselves like that. We got to try and *be something in life* [emphasis added].

Females see the *upper hand* enjoyed by males garnered through lenient social norms as somehow making it easier for them. Interestingly, they seem both to resent the double standard and appreciate the fact that stricter norms force them to *be something in life*, something they believe males are not as pressured into. Selling marijuana on the street—meant by Alisha figuratively or literally—is, ironically, not the type of alternative to school that will get males very far. Alisha's resentment seems to be centered on how much harder females need to work “[b]ecause things com[e] easy [for males]...they don't think that they gotta work for it. It's just that, with the females, we know that nothing is coming to us. We gotta work for it.” As Brianna puts it, males have the alternative, “[i]nstead of waking up to go to school, ...[they] wake up in the morning, smoke weed ...and that's it.” Though they feel

constrained by social norms, which exclude their participation in what they see as viable male alternatives to school, to an outside observer it seems Brianna and Alisha are enabled by the constraints on them to remain better focused and striving productively to *be something in life*. The males they describe, not without some envy, will unfortunately probably learn too late that alternatives to school, real or imagined by these females, are not what they seemed to be.

With the understanding that they lack these alternatives, Clarissa and Dominique described coming to the realization that they needed to pull their grades up after a poor academic start in high school. Speaking from their first-hand experiences, they both reported a poor start in their freshman year of high school and then getting back on track:

Clarissa: Then I finally woke up; I failed music, twice, you know what I mean? Like, I failed gym, I failed all these stupid classes and now I have to take them all over and it's just wasting time.

Dominique: [F]reshman year ... I never used to go to class. I used to get a 65 average But, after I started doing my work—sophomore year—I got into an 80 average and above and that's where I'm staying now. It depends on what you wanna do, 'cause I was like, I'm not trying to fail all my classes, then I'm gonna have to take it over. Half these people [read: males], they take it over during summer school and nights. You in school for six months; what's the point of not doing it then and then taking it over again? I can't see myself doing it.

Clarissa and Dominique realized rather quickly that the mistakes they made in school would never go away—that they would always have to deal with them if they were to move forward. The wherewithal to turn a difficult situation around, due in part to the lack of alternatives available to them, also extends to pregnancy. Brooke spoke about how males and females have very different responses to a pregnancy while in high school:

Even though a lot of females are getting pregnant nowadays and stuff like that, it's kinda like a shocker. . . it's like a bolt of lightening that just goes in their head, like “OK, I gotta graduate [from high school], and I gotta do this.”

In the context of the interview, the “gotta do this” that Brooke describes turns out to be going to college to get a job to support a child. Brooke expands on the different approaches males and females would take to an unexpected pregnancy later on in the interview:

I've seen . . . today that females would get pregnant and the males would drop out of school. They would just drop; they wouldn't think, all right, maybe I'm the one who has to go on in college 'cause I'm not pregnant so I gotta do this. No, they think, I'm gonna drop out and I'm gonna work in McDonald's or I'm gonna work in Burger King, you know? And the females are more likely to just, alright, I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna go to college, get out and I'm gonna make sure everything's OK, you know?

Brooke eventually shares how this “bolt of lightning”—to get things quickly in order—was her mother's experience:

[E]ven if you are pregnant, just like, get out, so you could at least have your diploma. I mean, college would not be a priority then, you know, but later on, when the child grows up, you can go back to college and finish what you wanted to do. Basically, my mother, she did that. . . .

Extrapolating from their own mistakes and the difficult experiences of others, these Banner students suggest that females are able to confront academic failure and the difficult circumstance of pregnancy pro-actively. In their opinion males either are not able to do that or choose not to do so because they have immediately available alternatives (e.g. dealing drugs, dropping out and working). They also think that males are unable to visualize how choices in their present affect opportunities in their future—their first reaction to adversity is to take advantage of whatever opportunity is available. One possible source of this reaction may be pressure on males to feel self-sufficient. As unrealistic or illusory as the alternatives to staying in school may seem (sports, selling drugs, dropping out for entry-level work or to get a GED), some males nevertheless feel they should be able to take care of themselves and a pregnant partner if need be by whatever means. This emphasis on self-sufficiency paired with a lack of faith in the educational system may influence males' decisions to dropout. A pessimistic long-term forecast of the possible benefits to completing high school and going to college may make the short-term costs of academic success seem not worth it.

Diana from National reports “men. . . wanna try to do things their own way, trying to find out the hard way their own self.” Brianna feels that this is particularly the case when males are successful at sports:

They just think, OK, well, I could go out and hustle anytime; I'm a baller. They think everything's easy, until, I guess, people don't learn their lesson until they graduate. I learned my lesson already, so I'm like, OK, I've got my head on my shoulders now, but everybody's gonna learn their lesson. It comes sooner or later.

Diana goes on to describe how a male cousin of hers has evidently taken this attitude all the way to college:

I have a cousin who has a football scholarship, and he just won something, a championship ring. And he failed every class in college. *Every class*. He doesn't think that he has to get an education. God forbid he breaks a knee or something; what is he gonna do? I mean, it's sad [emphasis added].

Our female interviewees perceived males as having a range of alternatives to school. Males interviewed also reported knowing males who dropped out of school to pursue these options. Analysis suggests that these alternatives – as unsustainable and non-normative as they are – are pursued by males out of lack of faith in education, lenient social norms and quite possibly males' need to feel self-sufficient. Though it seems that many of our female interviewees at both schools may envy these males' alternatives, they portrayed themselves as able to confront adversity constructively and as having more faith in the promise of education. In terms of keeping more males involved in school, the crux of the issue is to disabuse males of the notions that these alternatives really exist, are likely and that they are sustainable.

- **Finding #1.4:** Both males and females at Banner described occasionally being ridiculed by some of their peers for doing well in school. Students at National reported that their peers were supportive of achievement, that competition exists among high achievers, and that discussing college-going was difficult around their less academically successful peers.

In seeking to avoid the social stigma of “acting smart,” students may voluntarily disengage from education, and some of the students in our small groups said they felt peer pressure *not* to succeed in school. Whether a result of their focus on the present in terms of cultivating a reputation or other peer pressures related to taking *the wrong path*, several males interviewed at Banner articulated their struggles with this pressure:

Antoine: [I]f you're an intelligent guy, people are going to look down on you, like, why is he paying attention to his schoolwork and stuff like that. . . . If a girl is intelligent, they're like, yeah, I'm intelligent, blah, blah, blah, I get to do all this stuff, but if me and him go out, we get a 96 average or something like that, I'd probably be the same one to call him a loser.

Calvin: You know, I try to hang around people who have that same general idea [of going to college], 'cause I feel if you don't set yourself around those people then the people who don't have that idea are just going to hold you back, you know, and that's peer pressure.

According to Antoine, female students can take pride in their successes without ridicule from their peers. That he himself would call his friend a loser for getting a 96 average suggests some internalization of this tendency to ridicule success in school. Calvin says he tries to avoid this type of ridicule by hanging out with students who have college-going plans.

Female students in our small groups at Banner also spoke about the influence of peers on academic engagement. Alisha claims that some students "are smart, but they just want to be in the in-crew and follow their friends." Her vignette describes the negative sanctions for doing well in school:

OK. She's my friend, she gets high grades. I get low grades, alright? So I'm going to say to her, it's all of us and she got the highest grade: "Oh, you're a crumb bum! You're a geek!," 'cause she's getting higher grades than me.

There is mixed evidence from those interviewed at National about social sanctions for doing well at school. On the one hand, evidence seems to imply that this process is the reverse for some of our interviewees. David said his friends are congratulatory towards each other when they get a good grade on a test:

Interviewer: [D]o you ever feel a sense that you can't say that you made a 96 on a test or made a good grade on the test?

David: I don't know. Usually when we say we got a good grade or something, they say back that's a great score.

Competition among high achievers at National seems to occur in a way not seen at Banner. Ziad reports that among the “group of people that . . . [take] AP courses . . . they really want to accomplish their goals and they really want to compete with each other, beat each other.” David singles out one person for his competitiveness:

One thing I like hate: when these—its actually just one person—he always thinks he’s better than most people. And when he hasn’t been doing well in class, he’s like, “I can do much better than you and everyone else.” It’s just kind of annoying to see that cockiness.

On the other hand, Carla and Ben in a mixed gender group at National said that the issue of going to college or being successful academically garners mixed reactions from their non-academically successful peers.

Carla: Well, my friends, they don’t really care about school. They just come here to hang out. Sometimes we talk about thinking about going to college, they don’t say anything. They said that I’m the only one who thinks of going to college. They don’t think about that. [They say,] “You are the only smart one. You’re the only one who wants to go to college.” So what’s the point of me going to college? I wanna go, have a career. They don’t really care about that. It’s like they want to hang out, and that’s it.

Interviewer: You just nodded your head. Do you agree with that or disagree with that?

Ben: Yeah, I agree with that, but it’s also their choices, their kind of friends, who they hang around with. But it’s also hard. If you act first as a friend . . . that person [a lower achieving student] will look at you like you’re hating them or something. You can’t really talk to certain friends about certain things, ‘cause they’re not, I would say, on your level.

Our interviewees provided ample evidence that they had to contend with the issue of peer pressure. But, several seemed to have a good sense of how to handle this pressure and keep their eyes on the college degree prize. This seems particularly the case for Ben and Carla who explained thoughtfully that they need to negotiate the issue of college-going with their less academically focused friends. Even beyond the issue of day-to-day ridicule, several were cognizant of the rather simple influence that peers can have on their orientation towards education. Our

interviewees may partially insulate themselves from the ridicule of peer pressure by participating in a program which both validates their college goals as well as puts them in contact with other academically focused students. This was the case for Matteo and Warren in terms of the good/hard way or the bad/easy way. That is, many in our relatively small sample had made choices about whom they associated with because they understood how this may potentially affect their perspectives.

On the other hand, many reported having friends who were either not participating in the program or were doing poorly in school. This was corroborated by the instructors we interviewed at both schools. But, this does not mean that their friends are necessarily going to put them down for working hard in school. On the contrary, they may play a mentor role. Consider Arthur's advice to his friends:

I think most of my friends are just trying to make it through each day [of high school]. So I would tell them to work through each day, and to keep your mind on college ... But take baby steps when you get [to college]. Don't overdo it and see that you'd fail because you took everything at once.

Thus, far from being academic snobs, many of our interviewees seem to have a balanced approach to being focused on their school work, dealing with the divergent social pressures as well as perhaps acting in an advisory capacity with their less successful friends. Those students who do not have these capabilities, however, are likely to be encouraged by their peers to resist school for fear of ridicule. Unfortunately, males typically experience stronger sanctions for doing well in school and, according to our interviewees, have a broader range of potential alternatives to school to consider. Both of these factors are most likely implicated in their higher rates of disengagement.

While not enough interviews were conducted to claim definitively that a difference exists in peer pressure at these two schools, a pattern does seem to emerge. Banner students of both sexes mention having to deal with social sanctions for doing well in school. National interviewees, on the other hand, talk about both the competition to do well in school and the need to be discreet with some of their peers on the subject of going to college. Whether or not these differences are related to wider peer socialization processes in the school, this is clearly an issue that the students in our small groups at both schools need to contend with. If this is the case for academically motivated students, the sanctions against striving for those who are less motivated or academically successful may entail even more pressure. Setting

aside for the moment the issue of whether or not such students could meet the criteria for participation in *College Now*, the stigma for participating in a program with a college focus may be a serious deterrent.

Students in our small groups offered insightful perspectives on how they think males and females generally differ in relation to education in high school and planning and preparing for college. Banner females readily offered their opinions about what they saw as quite explicit differences between males and females in school and education; Banner males spoke of gender differences in relation to education, but also saw these as having to do with individual circumstances, motivations and choices (such as who one chooses as friends) rather than gender *per se*. Banner females did not evoke individual circumstances, motivations and choices as a source of difference, though some acknowledged those factors in general when asked. The College Now instructors interviewed at Banner also spoke of distinct differences between males and females in relation to education.

National students of both sexes were far more conditional in their appraisal of differences. Similarly, the two College Now instructors interviewed at National offered more gender-neutral factors such as socioeconomics or family upbringing in explaining what shapes students' and kids' relationship to education. What emerges from these characterizations is that Banner seems to have a more gendered culture than National.

Study Question #2:
Do the high schools play a role in shaping male and female educational engagement, in general, and participation in *College Now*, specifically? If so, how?

The Role of School Security and Discipline

- **Finding #2.1:** Strict school security (the presence of police, metal detectors and what are perceived to be patterns of overly strict or inconsistent discipline) might contribute to a de-motivating atmosphere at both schools. Getting through security may hinder students from getting to *College Now* classes on time.

We asked students questions about their experiences in high school and their views on the school social environment in order to shed light on features that might affect male engagement in education and participation in the *College Now* program. One issue that emerged from an analysis of our small group interviews at both schools is students' negative experiences with and attitudes toward their schools' security and discipline efforts. Both schools had disproportionately high rates of incidents reported to the police, and so at the time of the study both had recently undertaken intensive measures to improve school safety and discipline.⁵ These included the installation of permanent metal detectors, the prominent presence of unarmed school safety officers (SSA's) who scan and search students, and zero-tolerance policies for certain behaviors.

The impact of security measures—restrictive school rules, weapons screening and disciplinary actions perceived as inconsistent—is revealed in students' accounts. Students at Banner complained that the administration's interest in improving school order led to bans on big belt buckles, cell phones, and hats and contributed to harsh discipline for even minor transgressions. Speaking from her experience of being suspended for being truant, Clarisse makes clear her ironic appreciation of being punished for missing school by being required to miss still more school.

Ok, I understand you're supposed to be punished, you know what I mean, but why would you suspend me? You just gave me another day off from school, you know what I mean, like, that's what I wanted in the first place, like, that's ridiculous.

Marcos, a non-*College Now* participant, reported that “if you’re late for class, they take your ID. I was right near my class and the guy picked me up,” to which Jay added: “I mean their intention is right. It’s just the execution.”

Most students complained about “scanning”— the time-consuming process of going through the metal detector and/or being scanned with a wand by the SSA’s. Students must also remove belts and often coats and have their bags run through airport-type scanners. This process takes place each time a student enters the school building, typically creating long lines outside in the morning and delaying students getting to class. This is particularly onerous for students trying to get into the building to attend *College Now* classes that may begin as early as 7 a.m.

The emphasis on order in the schools, as necessary as it no doubt is, has implications for male engagement. Evidence suggests that some males at Banner may be engaged in a struggle of wills with school security agents. Mr. Franklin, a 10-year veteran at the school, said that he had seen males resist security agents’ requests to go to class and thinks some profiling occurs:

male students may in some phases be treated differently ... [A] person may come with a preconceived idea of what the student can do and what they’re about, and they behave a certain way towards that student. It’s not always positive, and I think that’s projected more on the male students than the female students. One student may, in some cases, in a lot of cases, may be perceived as a threat instead of as just a student, [as an] adolescent kid.

Male students at National also said there is some tension over security-related measures, though they attributed it to a different source: attempts to gain attention from friends.

Interviewer: [Is it] more common [for] guys [to] get in trouble with the security guards?

Ben: A guy will show off if he sees his friends around and the security guard is trying to get them [read: him] in trouble. And so it’s to get attention and his friends will think of him as a bad boy or whatever.

Interviewer: That’s kind of into the whole popularity thing.

Ben: Yeah.

Arthur: I think that’s equal, guys and females in this school. I’ve seen [a] security guard [who] says, “Go to class!” real loud, and they’ll want all the attention. They’re like, “Oh.” They’re standing up, but they’re really not doing anything ...

making themselves look immature. So it's like- grow up!

By Ben's account, male students at National are not so much targeted by security officers as they are agents of attention-seeking provocation, a strategy Arthur notes both male and female students use. Whatever the motives that lead to these encounters, it seems teachers and administrators rely on the pervasive presence of security guards in both schools to maintain order.

Of the two teachers interviewed at National, only Ms. Bridgers spoke about different treatments of males and females, and she saw those treatments as responses to the different ways males and females handle problems. Since males "act out," they are attended to more readily:

I don't think educationally across the board males and females are treated fairly. I've done a lot of research also, and I think that it's really true that males are attended to much more readily than females, in terms of their needs. I think that's why more males are diagnosed with [ADD]... because males act out. So if males act out, then they are tended to. Females tend to be quiet for the most part, and so many times a girl could sit there, be quiet, a good kid, and have a problem and you don't know it.

In this view, acting-out is a visible sign of individual problems, and since males do it more, they get more attention to their problems than females. If school climate influences how teachers think about students, this viewpoint and others we heard suggests that National is a school with a less punitive approach towards male behavioral issues. This despite nearly identical rates of incidents reported to the police. Those we interviewed at National more often expressed sensitivity to individual rather than stereotypical factors of behavior than those we spoke with at Banner.

On the positive side of the security measures, students in both schools reported improvements in safety and order. Some Banner students thought the bad reputation of their school in the media was not warranted. Jay, a non-*College Now* participant, reports that "...the school's getting a lot better. No [cops] walking around the hallway like there used to be." Students recruited from the developmental course at National also reported improvement in school discipline--fewer fights, hallways that were more orderly, and a school with an improved academic focus. Diana reports that National is "... changing for the better, with the metal detectors; it helps taking out weapons and stuff...." The three male students

enrolled in a college credit course also mentioned that discipline, safety and morale had improved in their school over the last year. Ziad suggests that this may be a result of the hard work of the principal and a change in teachers' behavior towards students.

We heard dissenting opinions on this issue, as well. Two developmental course students at National said they were still concerned about violence. Ben told us there is a lot of "drama ... fights, arguments and stuff, and sometimes you actually feel that you're in danger of being hurt...." One National teacher reported having to deal with a fight between a boy and a girl the previous semester in one of her regular high school classes: "the girl was bigger than the boy, and she really went at it with him."

Despite the attention to safety, students and teachers at Banner provided evidence that the school continues to struggle to create a positive and effective discipline climate.

Mr. Townsend's description of the intersection of a critical mass of student apathy, class cutting and ineffectual punishments suggests a problematic discipline climate among the general school population:

I've had many students, they just really don't care at all, they have a general feeling of apathy ... They're teenagers, you know, they don't like authority, they don't like being told what to do. And all schools, I'm sure, have a general feeling like that among many students. But I think at [Banner], for some reason, the kids are more able to act on that. If they don't feel like going to class, they just don't go, and there's not really much punishment, or there's no repercussion, I mean, there are repercussions, but they don't see them. *There's nothing to control their behavior effectively* [emphasis added].

Mr. Townsend's comment that "there are repercussions, but they don't see them" implies that students do not understand that not tending to schoolwork is going to affect them in the future. For those students who already have a weak commitment to their academics or no sense of how what they do now affects their future, the lenient approach towards cutting that Mr. Townsend describes functions like a blank hall pass. These factors might explain why Banner's average daily attendance in 2004 – 2005 was 76% ,compared to 85% at National.

Jay has the following to say about the lack of consistency of discipline at

Banner:

Interviewer: What do you think bothers kids the most in Banner?

Jay: The lack of communication between students and teachers.

Interviewer: In what way?

Jay: Teachers just think, oh, they're the teacher, they can do whatever, set what rule, talk to you in any which way, and then the students feel that way. That's why the students yell at them, and give them that attitude, 'cause you don't talk to them in a nice manner. So you don't get that respect.

Like his peers at Banner, Ziad laments the inconsistent discipline dealt out by faculty. He recollects an incident in which a particular administrator sent a student home for wearing a sexually suggestive shirt but reacted positively to another student with an equally suggestive shirt. Students seem very attuned to inconsistent discipline efforts by teachers and staff, which may cause resentment, poor morale and academic disengagement. This process is implied in the following exchange with Diana.

Diana: ...they try to take it out on all the students, but it's really not everybody in the high school, it's the kids that are doing it, not us.

Interviewer: So, you feel like everybody gets blamed for what a few kids do?

Diana: Yeah.

Interviewer: [What about] . . . the few kids that are just up to problems, what's going on with them?

Diana: They just want to do it, they want to act out. Instead of doing it at home, they're going to come to school and do it.

Despite some improvements, interviewees at both schools suggested that disorder is still a problem. They also said they felt frustrated by their schools' overly strict and inconsistent discipline efforts. One point to be kept in mind is that our informants at both schools are by and large academically motivated and quite probably well-integrated members of their school communities. They are likely to be the students with whom teachers and staff have favorable relations. Despite this, some expressed quite pointed frustration with the discipline culture at their schools. For those students who do not take school seriously and resist the rules by acting out, cutting class or pursuing other disruptive activities, their frustration is likely to be much higher, especially if they are repeatedly disciplined. It is safe to say that males

find themselves more often on the other side of a disciplinary dean's desk than females. Mr. Townsend confirmed this supposition that males have a more confrontational relationship with school authority than females:

When you look at being subjected to an authority figure for 45 minutes at a time, females tend to get a little bit more quickly acclimated to their type than the males. You walk through the dean's office, and just sit there and observe, and you'll see a big disparity between the type of problems that the males have as opposed to the type of problems that the females have.

Male educational disengagement is partly about the struggle with adult authority in the schools as well as resistance to a discipline climate, whether students act out of spite, lack of faith in an educational payoff, or interest in more immediate pursuits. Regardless of the reasons that contribute to their disproportionate educational disengagement, there are simply fewer of them to recruit for *College Now* courses. As we will see, those who recruit students for *College Now* courses are interested in students who have good attendance patterns (i.e. they don't cut class or get suspended regularly) and are academically focused. If males are more likely to choose behaviors which do not meet this profile, then they are less likely to be recruited as well, even if they have the potential to do well in *College Now* courses.

The Role of Social Norms, Peer Pressure and Influence

- **Finding #2.2:** The schools were described both by students and teachers as having diffuse peer social groups with evidence of cross-racial male and female friendships. An academically focused “clique” of relatively high achievers (“top scholars” or “brightest bunch”) seemed to have a distinct identity at both schools, comprised of *College Now* and non-*College Now* students of both sexes.
- **Finding #2.3:** *College Now* did not appear to play a role in social differentiation among students. Since most students do not take courses in *College Now* until their junior or senior year, the program does not play a primary role in student identity. Furthermore, *College Now* students of both sexes described having friends who are both non-*College Now* participants and not doing as well academically.

In addition to school security efforts and discipline climate, another theme that emerged regarding students’ school experiences is the existence of diffuse and/or permeable peer groups or cliques. Student interviewees at Banner and National described how well student cliques got along. In addition, several interviewees at both schools spoke positively about the diversity of the student population which suggests at the outset that race does not play a distinct role in social groupings. This is not surprising in that both schools have a good deal of racial heterogeneity, although less so at Banner where black students are a large majority of the student population.

Antoine and Calvin at Banner emphasize the social fluidity between students associated with the school’s various extracurricular activities:

Interviewer: It’s not cliquish here?

Antoine: Not really...

Calvin: Everybody hangs out with everybody. I mean, you’re hanging out with cheerleaders and the track team and the scholars. Basically everybody is together, I would say.

Antoine: It’s like what she said before: you know somebody through somebody else. I’ve never experienced something like, “Oh, you’re hanging with him. Don’t hang around with him. He’s stupid,” or something like that ... If I know him, I

know the rest of the track team. . . . [I]f I know someone on the track team, I know somebody else on the cheerleading team or something like that. You know people through other people, and you get to hang out with them.

These two students see participation in extracurricular activities, not social cliques, as a source of social identification. They also describe a general sense of inclusiveness (“Everybody hangs out with everybody”) and fluid networking (“You know people through other people, and you get to hang out with them”), at least between students who are participating in these normative school activities.

Some interviewees, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the way some students differentiated themselves, perhaps the people with whom Antoine and Calvin associate. In various ways, Warren, Joey and Matteo in the all-male Banner group expressed a negative opinion about what they deemed the popular students.

In what follows, Warren implicates parents for providing some students with “anything they want,” which for adolescents means first and foremost nice clothes:

Basically, those are the so-called ‘popular students,’ usually the guy or the girl with parents that spoil them . . . [P]eople will say this guy has a lot of money or this girl has a lot of money, when it’s the parents that are giving them the money. So yeah, usually, it’s the guy or the girl with the parents that spoil them and give them anything they want.

Joey and Matteo also took issue with the popular but “spoiled” crowd associated with school sports teams that in an attempt to be cool made fun of smarter students. Perhaps referring to the same group, Clarisse, Alisha and Brianna criticized students like these for dressing up and “trying way too hard” to impress:

Clarisse: I don’t care what they do to their hair, what jewelry they have, like, you know what I mean? I dress different when I’m not in school, like, what’s the point of trying hard for people that I don’t care about?

Alisha: You could be the smartest person, if you have nice clothes, you’re popular. It doesn’t matter.

Interviewer: [Would you say that] . . . *College Now* kids aren’t part of the big, popular [group?] **Brianna:** No, they call it “top scholars.” They’re smart and they just dress nice. . . .

According to Brianna, the top scholars are not strictly or exclusively identified with *College Now* participation. It seems some top scholars are in *College Now* but not all.

Social location in the school may have something to do with the contrast between Antoine and Calvin's perspective and that of Warren, Joey, Matteo, Clarissa and Alisha. Antoine and Calvin describe a fluid exchange between students involved in the extracurricular activities, because they are themselves part of either the top scholars or extracurricular activities normative groups. Antoine and Calvin are enrolled in a college credit course and both mention their freedom to associate with students in track and cheerleading. Dominique, in the all-female small group, said that some males in *College Now* are also "in sports," though we do not have specific detail that Antoine and Calvin were. Clarisse and Alisha are part of the popular clique that dress to impress, but they also distance themselves from those in the academic clique and, it should be noted, are in developmental not college credit courses in *College Now*.

Students in the small groups at National, similar to those at Banner, also spoke positively about the diversity of their large, complex student population. David: "[T]his school has so many people that I don't really see any popular group, 'cause mainly there's too many people, too many different schedules." When asked, Diana told us she did not really know who the popular kids were at National. From the teacher interviews at both schools, we also learned that student group boundaries were quite permeable. In describing the school's social structure, Mr. Townsend at Banner said that "most of the academically successful kids in the school sort of hang out. They have their own sort of clique." Despite this fairly well-defined group of 'top scholars,' he sees "the higher achieving kid, or the kids who do best academically" associating with "kids who are probably not college bound, or who don't do well academically." This supports his characterization of Banner as "not very cliquey" as well as being comprised of "a diverse community of students." Academic snobbery did not seem to play a role in social differentiation among the students in our study, though Alisha and Clarisse do criticize some of their peers for dressing to impress. Despite different student views on social groups at Banner, those differences do not appear to be a source of social conflict.

Students in the small groups at both schools mentioned being friends with others who were not doing well academically. Like their Banner counterparts, those at National also spoke about having friends who were not participating in *College Now* and who were not necessarily doing well academically. Based on the

experiences of those in these groups, it appears that neither participation in *College Now* nor academic standing plays much of a role in choosing friends at either school. Rather, social groups seem to form around different, more fluid sets of preferences, including but not strictly determined by academic achievement. Nevertheless, students and teachers at both schools told us that the most academically motivated and successful students had a highly visible, yet inclusive, clique (at Banner, this clique is referred to the ‘top scholars’ or ‘scholars’ by interviewees). Groups like these are a common feature of high schools, particularly for college-bound students who may see themselves competing for rank and credit in the college admissions process. Both the school and students co-construct these groups, with the school influencing group membership through academic tracking from ninth grade on, a process that has implications for *College Now* recruitment in junior year.

Several students at Banner spoke about guidance counselors primarily and teachers secondarily acting as gatekeepers to advanced academic opportunities. Banner has a gifted program, with which Antoine has been associated since freshman year: “Like our whole high school careers, we’ve been in the same classes because they just keep taking the same students, which they call ‘the brightest bunch,’ and they just keep putting them in the same classes.” Though a beneficiary of this tracking, Antoine realizes nevertheless that it has a steep downside for less motivated students:

Now that’s a good thing for us, but if you take the students that don’t really want to go to college and keep putting them into the same classes, they’re going to influence each other. They’re gonna be like, “Oh, you don’t want to go to college either. Oh, we don’t need to go to college,” and that’s gonna help it spread. You need to mix them up with a few students, get some good ideas into their heads, but, no, they’re acquainted with the same people that are their same type.

Brooke also suggests that guidance counselors sometimes act discouragingly to less successful students:

Even though they ask them for certain things, they would just like put them down. I heard a guidance counselor say to another student, “You’re not going to make it.” How can you have a guidance counselor that puts you down like that?

Calvin has not witnessed this discouragement at Banner first hand as Brooke has, but he thinks “it’s implied ... not that they’ll straight up say that, but basically they

[the guidance counselors] don't pay attention that much. They don't show any interest." This may disproportionately affect males, as they are most often the students who are struggling at school.

At National, a couple of students also complained about the indifference of teachers and even deans. Ben claims that some of the deans "care about themselves—they don't care about the student." Arthur told us, "there are some teachers who really don't come off like they care. They do perhaps half-jobs and they just don't know how to like really make the student feel like they want to teach them." As a result, Arthur feels that "some of the kids wanna drop out, leave or stuff." If students are struggling or uninterested in school work in the first place, this kind of perceived indifference or explicit discouragement, like the perceived hostile disciplinary climate, probably contributes to the rates of student attrition from 9th to 11th grades.

We have seen that the students in our groups did not for the most part choose their friends based on academic standing or participation in *College Now*, nor did the program play a role in academic differentiation. Mr. Townsend at Banner went so far as to say that the 'top scholars' are unlikely to participate in *College Now*, because the most ambitious, high achieving students who aspire to elite colleges know that community college-sponsored dual enrollment credit will probably not be accepted. Furthermore, for those students making plans to go to Ivy League or other highly selective postsecondary colleges, *College Now* would take time away from the pursuit of other activities that these competitive schools are looking for in their applicants (e.g. AP credits and extracurricular activities like sports, music or volunteer work). As we have seen, both Banner and National may recruit students based on their academic standing into *College Now*, but Townsend suggested that at least some of these students may not think the program is right for them. Two of the students among our groups at Banner—Antoine and Calvin—are evidence that not all students who aspire to competitive postsecondary institutions avoid *College Now*. Antoine hoped to go to the University of Pennsylvania (where two of his sisters have gone), and Calvin's first choice was Georgetown.

One reason *College Now* may not be a factor in the social calculus at these schools could be due to the fact that the program is not integrated into the school day in such a way as to be a means of social differentiation. The classes may simply occur too early in the morning to be a source of social reference. Certain academic tracks at the schools may help constitute, if not determine, the identification of students as academically gifted, and this process has implications for *College Now*

recruitment and participation. As we will see, *College Now* does not seem to play as active a role in this process as it could, but rather functions as a programmatic opportunity for both schools to provide their students with specific educational experiences.

Attitudes toward College Now and Recruitment to the Program

- **Finding #2.4:** For both males and females, *College Now* supplements decisions to go to college. For the most part, *College Now* students in sections of college credit and developmental courses planned to go to college even before they participated in the program. Teacher interviewees confirmed how *College Now* plays this supplemental role. Student interviewees of both sexes understood the effort it takes to be in the program, and a few spoke of males as unwilling to make the necessary effort. All had good family and school support to go to college and had plans to go, though those interviewed in the lower grades had less firm ideas about where they wanted to go to college. Some students at both schools recognized the positive influence on their own college plans of associating with *College Now* students.
- **Finding #2.5:** Recruitment to *College Now* courses took place in many ways. Some students responded to open calls and class presentations (*open-call recruitment*). Some students were encouraged by friends who were already participating in *College Now* (*collateral recruitment*). Students in honors or special academic programs were directly channeled into specific college credit *College Now* courses (*associational recruitment*). And guidance counselors and/or teachers sometimes invited students to take various courses for different reasons: those with good grades and attendance were invited to take college credit courses; those who needed preparation for the Regents' math and English tests were invited to take developmental courses; and some students were invited who were seen as likely to attend a CUNY college (*selective invitational recruitment*). Each of these methods had distinct effects and might directly or indirectly impact patterns of male enrollment.

At high schools that partner with the *College Now* program, any eligible

student may participate. Kingsborough *College Now* has an active recruitment program. Both Banner and National have local *College Now* high school liaisons or program coordinators and counselors (who also teach the Student Development courses), and both the liaisons and counselors have a role in recruiting students into *College Now* courses. The primary effort to recruit new students is made by teams from the KCC program that visit students in their junior year and make group presentations in English or social studies classes. Until recently, the introductory activity was followed a few weeks later with an academic advisement session and then on-site registration at the high school. The first two steps have now been combined so that the introductory presentations include preliminary registration during the classroom visit, followed later by registration and orientation after eligibility has been formally determined. All new *College Now* students are also invited to an on-campus visit in May, during which they can learn about *College Now* summer programs, speak to counselors about choosing a major, and get an ID. A similar procedure of classroom visits is used to re-register students already in *College Now* courses for the following semester.⁶

In Finding 2.3, we discussed how *College Now* did not appear to be a source of social differentiation among the students at either school. But as already noted, the program does appear to opportunistically recruit at least some of its students through existing programs at each school that serve to stratify students by academic achievement. As we interpreted the student and teacher interview transcripts, we developed a conceptual model of *College Now* recruitment in order to systematically analyze the different ways students came to the program. Table 7 (p. 43) provides a typology of *College Now* recruitment and some idea of the implications of various methods on male participation in particular.

When asked about how they came to be in the program, five of the 17 students in our small group cited specific program efforts at recruiting (i.e. advertisements, announcements, presentations in class) that encouraged them to participate. We call these methods *open call recruitment*. Four students said they participated in *College Now* because friends already in the program encouraged them, a method we call *collateral recruitment*. The other six students for whom we have information reported that they were recruited by guidance counselors or teachers. Evidence collected from students and teachers suggests that recruitment by school staff consists of two main types, both of which have to do with students' academic standing. The first type appears to depend on a student's involvement with a special program, such as the gifted program at Banner or an honors or special topics program at National. These topic-based programs, depending on the type of course, may typically attract more males or females. We call this form of (nearly mandatory) recruitment into college credit courses of students enrolled in honors

and special tracks *recruiting by association*. Ms. Bridgers confirmed that *College Now* draws on these higher academic tracks at National:

We have a very strong honors program, which is a humanities based program, and so the kids that are in that program are sort of guided to taking the sociology class and the humanities class. And we have a very strong [special topic] program so those kids are guided to taking the [special topic] courses. So it becomes sort of standard procedure for some of these kids to do that.

This “standard procedure” of “guiding” students from honors courses and special topics programs at National into specific *College Now* courses would suggest a tight programmatic connection between those courses and *College Now*. This would act to benefit students enrolled in those courses while also perhaps making the *College Now* program dependent on those courses for *College Now* enrollments. Both Ken and David were participants in such a program at National, and they pointed out that they knew many of their peers in *College Now* classes due to this connection. Ken told us: “[k]inda like we all just migrate together.” He went on to suggest an almost automatic connection between the program and *College Now*: “I didn’t find [*College Now*], I was given like, ‘Hey, you come here and take *College Now*.’ So I didn’t find it, they found me.” David also reported that “many teachers and faculty. . . try to influence people to [be in] *College Now*.”

A second way in which students are recruited into *College Now*, other than a student’s association with a particular track or program, relates to academic standing. Ms. Bridgers at National describes what we call *selective invitational recruitment*: “All the guidance counselors are very aware of *College Now* and do encourage the students to take *College Now* courses as soon as they’re eligible to take them.” The flipside to selection by good academic standing is what Franklin and Townsend at Banner and Cruthers at National talked about: why students are *not* recommended to *College Now*—especially those with poor attendance records. Antoine confirmed that some selective recruitment occurs at Banner, in which teachers only talk about *College Now* with certain students who, we may assume, are likely to have good attendance and to be academically engaged.

There are, no doubt, multiple motives for selective recruitment. For example, staff view careful recruiting as a way to avoid exposing students to failure. Mr. Townsend suggests that *College Now* should not recruit students who are likely to get an F for non-attendance because it will de-motivate them to see that on their col-

lege transcript. Another motive to not encourage marginal students into *College Now* might have something to do with a concern for successful course completion rates. Mr. Townsend made it clear: “They want to keep this program going... [because] it does help a lot of kids. It is an important program to have. If you have just mass numbers of kids who are going to fail, it doesn’t really look very good for the program.” Less proficient or motivated students are also likely the ones who would drop a course or be dropped from a course due to poor attendance. It could therefore serve the program to exercise discretion and recruit reasonably capable students in order to be viable and sustain itself.

| Table 7 Methods of Recruitment to College Now Courses by Operative, Course Type Destination, Level of Student Initiation and Implications for Male Participation | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Method of Recruitment | Operative | Course Type Destination | Level of Student Initiation | Implication for Male Participation |
| By open-call | College Now program | Various (depending upon skill level and interest) | High | May not reach those males who are not proactive about their academic futures |
| Collaterally | Friends | Various | High | High female enrollment may mean lower opportunities for males to recruit male friends |
| By association | Teachers | College Credit (humanities and science college credit offerings) | Low | Precludes recruitment of males who are not represented in these programs |
| By selective invitation | Guidance/ College Counselors | | | |
| Good academic standing | | College Credit | Middle | Precludes recruitment of males with lower academic skills |
| Affinity | | Various | Middle | Precludes recruitment of males who are delaying college plans |
| In need of Re-mediation | | Developmental | Low | Good opportunity to recruit males with lower skill profiles |

Another variation of *selective recruitment* occurs when students are invited or enrolled in developmental courses in order to help them prepare for standardized tests. Ms. Bridgers at National told us that accepting some invitations is nearly mandatory:

We have a very large population of kids who have to take the remedial type, you know, writing course. We give it to them as sort of preparation for the ELA—the

English Regents and the math course as well. We do that. Many times the kids' first experience with the *College Now* program is through those courses, and they're not really given much of a choice as to whether to take them.

What we heard from students on pathways to *College Now* suggests that while general recruitment efforts of the program, such as announcements, flyers and presentations, seem to be quite effective, many high achieving students are recruited from honors and special programs and lower achieving students are simply enrolled in developmental math and English courses. Academic tracks in high schools are produced by the interaction of different academic abilities and needs of students and the schools' programmatic efforts to serve them. With its college-readiness focus and academic standards for participation, it makes sense that the schools would view and employ *College Now* as an opportunity to provide some of its students with particular learning opportunities. It is why a school is in partnership with the program. *College Now*, however, is also intended as a program to encourage less successful students to prepare for college-level work through developmental courses. It is quite plausible that each school crafts a unique balance between school-based needs and program-based goals to provide students with appropriate learning opportunities and recruit the right student for the right course.

The different methods of student recruitment into *College Now* may each have certain effects on rates of participation by gender, although it is difficult if not impossible to quantify those effects or to say with any certainty that taken individually or as a whole they play a significant role in the lower participation of males in the program. Recruitment is not the magic bullet to fix this problem, but the implications of intentional recruitment efforts should be considered part of the solution. Unmotivated or struggling male students, if they haven't already dropped out by the time *College Now* is recruiting, are unlikely to seek out or be invited to take on additional coursework. Except for "invitations" to take developmental courses, it seems most of recruitment methods are unlikely to draw unmotivated students either male or female. Since there is a larger pool of motivated females, however, the impact on male participation may be more acute. In schools where more females than males are already participating in *College Now*, collateral recruitment (i.e. friend-to-friend) may perpetuate gender imbalances.

Recruitment by association—the process by which students are encouraged to take *College Now* courses that are of the same discipline as an honors course or special topics program—may work to increase male participation in fields to which males are already drawn. An example of this exists at National, where a special top-

ics program attracts males in large numbers. In the case of schools like Banner, where males are likely underrepresented in honors or humanities programs, however, there are fewer to recruit in this manner. This occurs similarly in the recruitment of students with good academic standing. Lower numbers of males who meet this criteria mean fewer available for this form of *College Now* recruitment. The lack of males recruited in good academic standing may be offset, to some extent, by those in need of remedial work who are enrolled in *College Now* developmental courses.

There is a question, however, of whether these developmental courses lead to college credit courses or are viewed as more short-term Regents prep or simply to recover high school credits for those who are behind.

For the most part, the students in our small groups had found ways to navigate, succeed, and even thrive in these two large and complex schools, although both with some significant downsides. They viewed racial diversity and social diffuseness as positive features through which they learned about other people.⁷ These students possessed an ability to adapt to their large and diverse student body, an ability that may be crucial for developing attachment and navigating pathways to success in environments like these. We do not know if they had these adaptive abilities when they arrived in 9th grade or if they developed them through their high school experience, but it is likely that their less adaptive peers did not make it to junior year prepared to avail themselves of *College Now* opportunities.

Conclusion

Analysis of interviewees' perspectives regarding male educational disengagement and, by extension, *College Now* suggests that wider social forces and the social and administrative features of schools play intersecting roles in this problem. Many of the students we spoke with painted a picture of males valuing education less than females by being inattentive to the quality of their work, cutting classes, and pursuing other non-academic interests such as "hanging out," or playing sports or video games. Still other factors shape both male and female attitudes and decisions about the place of school in adolescent life, including: a lack of understanding about how high school, college and career are connected; the role of family and community in shaping educational attitudes and behaviors; and, particularly for males, the lure of mostly non-normative alternatives to school. When paired with a lack of faith in the long term benefits of education and the naive belief in self-sufficiency, males are disproportionately drawn to pursue these alternatives.

Alongside these large social factors, our study suggests that certain features of the schools may also deter male students from staying on track. Schools are employing more comprehensive measures to secure safety and order such as metal detectors, video surveillance, bans on personal items, police presence and zero tolerance policies. As necessary and well-intended as such measures may be to make schools safe and orderly teaching and learning environments, they nevertheless affect certain students more negatively than others, especially males of a certain profile who are already only marginally engaged. If in contrast to females, males have less impulse control, are more prone to react physically, and tend to have problems dealing with authority, an environment of heightened attention to students' behavior is likely to problematize males more often than females, leading to increased rates of disciplinary actions and disruption of educational progress.

We also heard from students about the influence of peers who sanctioned doing well in school, in ways both direct and indirect. There seemed to be more evidence of this at Banner than at National, which along with other evidence, suggests that Banner has a more gendered culture than National. But, most of the *College Now* students in our groups conveyed in their comments a sense of having come to terms with such negative pressure. They seemed to have developed a constructive perspective on the forces operative in their schools that shape students' paths to college. Students in different groups and from different schools often resorted to a dichotomous frame when describing these paths: the good way or the bad, the hard

way or the easy, the right way or the wrong. Along with the fact that they appeared to be outside of the academic elite, their constructive perspective suggests that *College Now* students may potentially be able to act as mentors for those who are less academically certain or motivated. They might help both their male and female peers who do not take their existing high school work seriously, do not see a value in education, and who have a hard time resisting peer pressure and the lure of non-academic pursuits that interfere with their way forward to college through participation in *College Now*.

In the course of producing and analyzing the data for this study we noted some provocative correlations between *College Now* participation and outcomes by race/ethnicity and sex. For example, males at National participate in the program at nearly an identical rate as females, but there are considerable differences among students of color by gender. Could the relationship between racial heterogeneity and inter-group cohesion be a factor for lower black and Hispanic male participation in the *College Now* program at National or at schools of a similar profile? As pointed out previously (see Table 3, p. 8), there is a much higher attrition rate for black and Hispanic students of both sexes at National when compared to Banner. The lower retention rate means that there are fewer eligible males of color to recruit into the program. Of the black males who started 9th grade in 2002 at National, only 28.8% are retained to the 11th grade in 2004. Seventeen percent more (45.8%) are retained at Banner. This difference in black male retention between the schools increases to approximately 20% for those in the 12th grade cohort.

Seen another way, black and Hispanic 11th graders of both genders are retained at Banner in slightly higher numbers than their *white* counterparts during this time period and at nearly the same rate as their white counterparts at National. This rate increases for those in the 12th grade cohort at both schools. These higher retention rates for students of color also translate into higher graduation rates at Banner when compared to National. For the entering cohort of 2000, 66% of black students had graduated by 2004 at Banner while this figure is 46% at National (see Table 8, p. 54).⁸

How might racial heterogeneity be related to these differences in retention, *College Now* participation and graduation? Both Banner and National have high percentages of minority students (88% and 68%), but National has a higher level of racial heterogeneity (.72) than Banner (.55).⁹ Moody's (2002) finding suggests that there should be higher levels of group segregation and fewer cross-racial associations at National than at Banner. While interviewees at both schools expressed posi-

tive perspectives on student diversity, we found two pieces of qualitative evidence that inter-group segregation may be present at National. First, several National students reported very low participation by black students in the *College Now* program. An analysis of *College Now* participation data confirms that students of color participate in *College Now* at disproportionately low rates at National when compared to Banner. Black males at National only represent 16.3% of the male enrollments of 11th and 12th graders in college credit *College Now* courses even though they represent 19.8% of the males in these grades. The percentage of Hispanic males enrollments in *College Now* college credit courses is even lower—4.9%, though they represent 17.3% of males in these grades. At Banner, males of color participate in *College Now* at rates which are more proportionate to their total numbers in these grades. Hispanic males make up 8.5% of the males in 11th and 12th grades and they make up 7.1% of the male college credit *College Now* enrollments. Black males make up 55.6% of the males in these grades, and they comprise 57.1% of the college credit *College Now* enrollments for males in these grades (see Table 11, p. 57).

A second piece of evidence that inter-group segregation may exist is one teacher's comment that "there are certain communities in this building and in this neighborhood that are very close knit, and if one person in the community says something, they take it to be fact." While "certain communities" most certainly implies groups based on race or ethnic background, it does not necessarily matter which one this teacher was referring to. This could, in effect, be evidence that fewer cross-racial associations exist at National due to its racial heterogeneity. It should be noted that we didn't find one reference to group segregation by race/ethnicity in any of the transcripts from Banner.

At National, students within racial groups may experience higher sanctions for crossing race lines because of the high level of heterogeneity in this school. In effect, the "burden of acting white" may be more salient at National than at Banner. In such schools, students are less likely to form cross racial friendships and the issue of being identified as "smart" - an identification of being white - comes into play. This pressure towards failure may then result in greater attrition and lowered *College Now* participation and graduation rates for students of color. A further piece of evidence to support Moody's (2002) thesis is that extracurricular and academic identification seemed a more important factor in student group identification at Banner than other types of clique formations. This is quite a remarkable and reassuring accomplishment for an over-crowded school which has had a protracted problem with reportable incidents. Males' and females' descriptions of the relative social har-

“bad reputation” and strict discipline efforts. An alternative explanation might be that the social stability they describe is somehow facilitated by the administration’s discipline and security efforts.

While there are no simple solutions to the large social and cultural forces that interfere with students’ education, there may be ways *College Now* as a program can address the issue of relatively low participation by male students through more strategic and intentional recruitment. We have already discussed the implications for male students of the different ways students are informed about and enrolled in courses (see above, p. 38-43), and in the section that follows we offer specific recommendations that might help address this issue.

Before we conclude, we want to pass along here what the students themselves suggested when asked what they thought could be done to increase the participation of males. Students thought recruitment could be improved by promoting the program’s visibility better through “signs” and “bright posters,” as well as more accessible *College Now* office space. One student at Banner—Dominique—said a lot of students thought *College Now* was only for seniors. This belief would certainly act to delay students from taking part in the program. Several students suggested that offering different course subjects at different times in the day might improve student interest and attendance, although at least one of the teachers had her doubts, especially about holding *College Now* classes in the afternoon when they would conflict with sports team activities.

Students mentioned ways that *College Now* could help with more practical issues, too, such as offering dual high school and college credit or helping with skills like note-taking or learning to write research papers. Another student thought it would be a good idea to have *College Now* classes recorded so that students could listen again to course lectures. A few students and at least one teacher expressed concerns about student understanding of the transferability of *College Now* credits to non-CUNY postsecondary institutions.

Recommendations

The *College Now* program could become more strategically proactive and less opportunistic in its recruitment efforts. Through professional development, increased data sharing, knowledge of and coordination with school programs, more students, especially males, might be identified in 9th and 10th grades and afforded learning opportunities that would engage them in student development, foundational courses, and remedial course work in order to prepare them for college credit courses in 11th and 12th grades. Based on our findings and analysis, the following recommendations might be considered by the *College Now* program.

- **Recommendation:** Develop strategic recruitment plans for each school based on deep local knowledge and the coordination of school-based and *College Now* learning opportunities from 9th through 12th grades.
- **Recommendation:** Discuss alternative scheduling of *College Now* courses with DOE and school leaders in order to enroll more males who would otherwise find it difficult to get to school early.
- **Recommendation:** Organize professional development activities for *College Now* instructors and guidance counselors to explore the social pressures males face that interfere with their educational engagement in general, often precluding their participation in *College Now*.
- **Recommendation:** Share *College Now* data with instructors and guidance counselors on the rates of participation, successful outcomes, and post-secondary enrollments of males and females to better apprise them of the challenge.
- **Recommendation:** Track student recruitment through the KCC *College Now* student course survey and share the results with school administrators and *College Now* staff.
- **Recommendation:** Expand the use of high school data to identify and reach out to students not in the program to discuss *College Now* learning opportunities appropriate to their academic development.

- **Recommendation:** Increase student awareness of *College Now*—its goals and opportunities—beginning in 9th grade and recruit students, especially males, into various program activities (such as campus visits, film festivals, etc.) before 11th grade.
- **Recommendation:** Increase the focus of advising, recruitment class presentations and student development course units on the relationship between high school performance, academic intensity, college and career outcomes, *College Now* and *College Now* credit transferability.
- **Recommendation:** Engage students in *College Now* courses on the issue of peer pressure and its relationship to academic disengagement in general with the goal of educating *College Now* students to become pro-academic role models in their school.
- **Recommendation:** Assess the impact security screening has on early morning access to the high school and student lateness in *College Now* courses and, if significant, discuss alternative security measures for *College Now* students with school leaders.

Directions for Future Research

Considering the importance and scope of this research topic, it would not have been possible to adequately address the many related issues it raises, even if we had more time and staff to devote to it. In conducting our study, we identified a number of additional research questions that could productively be addressed with a bearing on the rate of male participation in the *College Now* program, a few of which are outlined below.

- Interview eligible males who do not participate in *College Now* to better understand the incentives and disincentives to do so.
- Conduct high school-level quantitative analysis regarding the skill profiles and cut scores needed to be successful in developmental and college credit *College Now* courses.
- Examine whether developmental course experiences lead to additional course-taking for both males and females and, if so, what sequences seem to be the most popular and effective.
- Track the efficacy of *College Now* courses as pre-requisites to courses taken in the first postsecondary year at CUNY.
- Continue to track the enrollments and performance of *College Now* students from each high school into CUNY and begin to do so for other non-CUNY colleges (using the National Student Loan Clearinghouse database) to the extent possible.

Endnotes

¹ Heterogeneity is the probability that any two students are from different racial groups (Moody 2002: 694).

² These schools are also the sites of a complementary report, “College Now Courses in a High School Setting.”

³ Banner enrolled over 700 more students than National during the academic year this study was conducted.

⁴ Throughout this study the ellipsis is used to indicate that text has been omitted in the interest of brevity. The ellipsis is not used to denote a speaker’s pause.

⁵ It should be noted that National had a slightly higher rate of incidents reported to the police in the 2004-2005 school year than Banner. The introduction of zero-tolerance policies may be related to the relatively large number of suspensions meted out at these two schools when compared to similar schools city-wide. Over 300 suspensions were issued at Banner and over 200 for National during the 2004-2005 school year. This translates into a proportional suspension rate of 9.0% and 7.5% respectively when adjusted for school size.

⁶ See pp. 3-7 in “College Now Courses in a High School Setting” for a description of the schools and *College Now* programs.

⁷ Though not fully examined here, other factors promoting the social cohesion of these two schools such as positive and encouraging teaching staff, ample electives and extracurricular activities, and effective school leadership.

⁸ It should be noted that these retention and attrition rates are estimates based not on unit-level records, but on a panel type analysis of registrations by grades across time. Some transferring of students in and out of these schools for various and divergent reasons is assumed. And, while student stability reported on the report cards is over 90% for each school in 2004 and 2005, these are slightly lower than the figures for “similar schools” calculated by the New York City Department of Education. Thus these schools have higher than average turnover than similar schools.

⁹ Heterogeneity is measured using an index of fractionalization:

$$\text{FRACT}_k = 1 - \sum_{j=1}^N s_{jk}^2$$

Where s_{jk} is the share/percentage of ethnic group j in population k . The fractionalization index in a given population is the chance that two randomly selected individuals are in the same ethnic group.

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Appendix A Additional Tables

| Table 8 Selected Demographic and School Characteristics of Banner and National High Schools: 2004 – 2005 | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Students | Banner High School | National High School |
| Total | 3,500 | 2,800 |
| Grade 9 / 12 | 1,350 / 500 | 1,200 / 400 |
| Number of Students per Incident Reported to the Police | 16.5 : 1 | 14.6 : 1 |
| Number of Suspensions | Over 300 | Over 200 |
| Ethnicity & Gender | %* | %* |
| Black | 63 | 34 |
| Hispanic | 13 | 22 |
| Asian & Others | 12 | 12 |
| White | 12 | 32 |
| Female | 50 | 44 |
| Male | 50 | 56 |
| Attendance | 76 | 85 |
| Male Special Education | 10 | 9 |
| Female Special Education | 5 | 4 |
| Eligible for Free Lunch | 25 | 39 |
| School Capacity | 125 | 125 |
| Percent College Now Registrations | | |
| Male | 44 | 50 |
| Female | 56 | 50 |
| Percent College Now Successful Completions | | |
| Male | 87 | 72 |
| Female | 84 | 80 |
| 2000 Cohort Graduation Rate as of 2004** | | |
| Overall | 60 | 58 |
| Black | 66 | 46 |
| Hispanic | NA*** | 44 |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 48 | 67 |
| White | 58 | 66 |
| Female | 67 | 68 |
| Male | 50 | 48 |
| <p>* All percentages are approximations. ** Students who earned a local diploma with or without Regents endorsement by August 31st of the 4th year after entering 9th grade. *** Published reports have an apparent misprint; thus, this percentage is not available.</p> | | |

Table 9
Successful Completions of Male and Female Students in College Credit College Now
Courses at National and Banner High Schools: Fall 2004 to Spring 2006

| Term Enrolled | Male | | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| | National | | Banner | | Total | |
| | Enrollments | Successful Completions % | Enrollments | Successful Completions % | Enrollments | Successful Completions % |
| Spring 2006 | 124 | 85.5 | 96 | 89.6 | 220 | 87.3 |
| Fall 2005 | 78 | 84.6 | 48 | 77.1 | 126 | 81.7 |
| Spring 2005 | 106 | 83.0 | 100 | 76.0 | 206 | 79.6 |
| Fall 2004 | 95 | 89.5 | 75 | 68.0 | 170 | 80.0 |
| Spring 2004 | 120 | 85.8 | 141 | 75.9 | 261 | 80.5 |
| Fall 2003 | 70 | 90.0 | 52 | 88.5 | 122 | 89.3 |
| Spring 2003 | 78 | 87.2 | 70 | 94.3 | 148 | 90.5 |
| Fall 2004 | 48 | 91.7 | 37 | 70.3 | 85 | 82.4 |
| Total | 719 | 86.6 | 619 | 80.0 | 1,338 | 83.6 |

| Term Enrolled | Female | | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| | National | | Banner | | Total | |
| | Enrollments | Successful Completions % | Enrollments | Successful Completions % | Enrollments | Successful Completions % |
| Spring 2006 | 130 | 87.7 | 134 | 83.6 | 264 | 85.6 |
| Fall 2005 | 78 | 79.5 | 88 | 86.4 | 166 | 83.1 |
| Spring 2005 | 118 | 79.7 | 157 | 80.9 | 275 | 80.4 |
| Fall 2004 | 85 | 90.6 | 116 | 75.0 | 201 | 81.6 |
| Spring 2004 | 136 | 86.0 | 200 | 85.0 | 336 | 85.4 |
| Fall 2003 | 93 | 89.2 | 119 | 85.7 | 212 | 87.3 |
| Spring 2003 | 101 | 80.2 | 143 | 95.8 | 244 | 89.3 |
| Fall 2004 | 73 | 89.0 | 74 | 78.4 | 147 | 83.7 |
| Total | 814 | 85.1 | 1,031 | 84.3 | 1,845 | 84.7 |

Source: College Now Program

Table 10
Selected Characteristics of Student Interviewees

| Group | Pseudonym | Gender | Year | Race/ Ethnicity | Course Type |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Banner | | | | | |
| 1 | Warren | M | Jr. | Black | Credit |
| | Joey | M | Jr. | White | Credit |
| | Matteo | M | Jr. | Latino | Developmental |
| 2 | Alisha | F | Jr. | Afro-Carib | Developmental |
| | Brianna | F | Sr. | White | Credit |
| | Clarisse | F | Soph. | Black | Developmental |
| | Dominique | F | Jr. | Afro-Carib | Credit |
| 3 | Brooke | F | Jr. | Afro-Carib | Developmental |
| | Calvin | M | Jr. | Black | Credit |
| | Antoine | M | Jr. | Black | Credit |
| National | | | | | |
| 4 | Jay | M | Sr. | Asian | n/a |
| | Marcos | M | n/a | Hispanic | n/a |
| | Scott | M | n/a | Black | n/a |
| 5 | David | M | Jr. | White | Credit |
| | Ken | M | Jr. | White | Credit |
| | Ziad | M | Sr. | South Asian | Credit |
| 6 | Diana | F | Jr. | Black | Credit |
| 7 | Ben | M | Jr. | Black | Developmental |
| | Arthur | M | Soph. | Hispanic | Developmental |
| | Carla | F | Soph. | Hispanic | Developmental |

Table 11
Unduplicated Participation of Males and Females at Banner and National High Schools in College Credit College Now Courses
as a Proportion of 11th and 12th Graders by Race/Ethnicity: 2004-2005

| | National | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------|----------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Asian | | Hispanic | | Black | | White | | Other | | Total | |
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Total Number of 11th and 12th Graders | 59 | 60 | 68 | 71 | 78 | 91 | 189 | 156 | n/a | n/a | 394 | 378 |
| as a percentage of the total | 15.0 | 15.9 | 17.3 | 18.8 | 19.8 | 24.1 | 48.0 | 41.3 | n/a | n/a | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Number of Unduplicated CN Enrollments | 22 | 19 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 21 | 69 | 51 | 6 | 10 | 12.3 | 116 |
| Percentage of 11th/12th Graders Estimated to be Participating in College Now | 37.3 | 31.7 | 8.8 | 21.1 | 25.6 | 23.1 | 36.5 | 32.7 | n/a | n/a | 31.2 | 30.7 |
| Distribution by Race of Unduplicated College Now Enrollments | 17.9 | 16.4 | 4.9 | 12.9 | 16.3 | 18.1 | 56.1 | 44.0 | 4.9 | 8.6 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Banner | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Asian | | Hispanic | | Black | | White | | Other | | Total | |
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Total Number of 11th and 12th Graders | 95 | 71 | 41 | 63 | 269 | 380 | 79 | 71 | n/a | n/a | 484 | 585 |
| as a percentage of the total | 19.6 | 12.1 | 8.5 | 10.8 | 55.6 | 65.0 | 16.3 | 12.1 | n/a | n/a | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Number of Unduplicated CN Enrollments | 13 | 7 | 5 | 10 | 40 | 69 | 10 | 14 | 2 | 10 | 70 | 110 |
| Percentage of 11th/12th Graders Estimated to be Participating in College Now | 13.7 | 9.9 | 12.2 | 15.9 | 14.9 | 18.2 | 12.7 | 19.7 | n/a | n/a | 14.5 | 18.8 |
| Distribution by Race of Unduplicated College Now Enrollments | 18.6 | 6.4 | 7.1 | 9.1 | 57.1 | 62.7 | 14.3 | 12.7 | 2.9 | 9.1 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: NCDOE Office of Statistical Summaries; College Now Program

Appendix B

Research Plan and Study Limitations

Our early interest in a study of the Kingsborough *College Now* program dates to the summer of 2005, and by early fall of that year we had administrative approval to proceed. Working with our Collaborative Programs Research Fellows, we designed the Collaborative Programs Research Plan comprised of three studies involving the College Now program: 1) the KCC College Now Course Context Study (as it was then known); 2) the KCC College Now Male Participation Study; and 3) the College of Staten Island Discovery Institute Study. We submitted an extensive research proposal to the CUNY-wide Institutional Review Board on November 9, 2005 and received approval soon thereafter. Since our research involved collecting data in six New York City High Schools, we were required to submit a separate proposal to the New York City Department of Education, Division of Assessment and Accountability after we received CUNY approval, which we did on November 29, 2005. After responding to their request for clarification and minor changes in our protocol and consents forms, we received approval from the DOE on February 9, 2006, subject to the final approval of the regional superintendents and the school principals. All of the necessary approvals were secured by mid-March, and we were given clearance to begin to distribute the necessary parent consents for the student focus groups and student surveys at the two high schools involved in the Kingsborough studies.

Doing field research in public schools is always a challenge, even with the good support we had. It took us much longer than we anticipated to get into the schools in spring 2006 to begin these arrangements to organize the small group student interviews. Distributing invitations, getting required parent consents and student assents, locating rooms, getting groups together early in the morning, and conducting the interviews in the time we had all made it exceptionally difficult to collect the data we needed. As a result, we wound up with far fewer students than we had established as the minimum in our research protocol.

This study, therefore, has three principal limitations which have implications for the applicability of our findings both to the unit of analysis and to the intent of the original research questions. First, we fell short of the number of students we intended to recruit for the small groups. Fewer groups were held and fewer student voices were heard than might be necessary to develop comprehensive insight into this issue. Second, the small groups had a predominance of motivated students, particularly those drawn from the *College Now* college credit courses. Many of these students at both Banner and National told us they had a lot of encouragement (and in some cases pressure) from their parents to go to college; many reported that older siblings were either in college or had graduated; some described long-standing relationships with their guidance counselors; and most expressed high academic and career goals (e.g. desires to get advanced degrees and work in professional capacities). Less successful student voices of particular interest to the program are therefore underrepre-

sented. Third, we were unable to recruit a critical mass of eligible non-*College Now* participants, and so that group is represented by only three students. For a study intent on better understanding why this latter group does not participate in greater numbers, this was the most grievous omission. We have a number of second-hand informants—first-hand informants being those not participating in the program—from within *College Now*, and those students, while not the first choice as a source of data, were nevertheless able to provide us important insights into the issue of male participation.

Qualitative research is an interpretive method, and we have done our best with the data we have. Both the unpredictable and interpretative nature of the method constitutes strengths of qualitative work, and what we saw, heard, and have thought about extensively on this topic at two schools in Brooklyn suggest a number of different additional studies that could build on the work we began here. We hope to eventually have the capacity to do at least some of the follow-up research we mention in the conclusion, but in the meantime, we hope our efforts in this study and its companion study, “*College Now* Courses in a High School Setting,” will be of interest and use to the *College Now* program.

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