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Commentary/Op-Ed - April 2023

To boost economic mobility, help CUNY ACE grow

In this amNewYork op-ed, CUF's Eli Dvorkin and Robin Hood's Deborah McCoy urge city and state leaders to commit to scaling the highly promising but small-scale CUNY Accelerate, Complete, and Engage (ACE) program over the next five years to ensure that more New Yorkers from lower-income backgrounds can earn a college degree.

by Eli Dvorkin and Deborah McCoy

Taking action to ensure that more New Yorkers from lower-income backgrounds can earn a college degree is among the most effective steps city and state officials can take to boost economic mobility. That's why city leaders should expand the highly promising but small-scale CUNY Accelerate, Complete, and Engage (ACE) program—and help thousands more New Yorkers earn bachelors' degrees.

The problem is that too many of the 93,000 students enrolled full-time in CUNY's four-year colleges leave school without a degree. Only 36.2 percent of full-time students at CUNY's senior colleges graduate in four years. For Black and Latinx students, the graduation rate falls to 27.5 percent. Fortunately, CUNY ACE is beginning to change this.New research from the Center for an Urban Future (CUF) documents the strong return of investment ACE produces—helping students save money by completing their degrees more quickly, maximizing the state's investment in subsidized tuition by boosting completion rates, and strengthening New York's economy by raising earnings and growing the tax base.

In this op-ed, CUF's Eli Dvorkin and Robin Hood's Deborah McCoy urge city and state leaders to commit to scaling CUNY ACE over the next five years to reach about 30 percent of all full-time senior college students. City leaders can start by doubling the investment made in last year's budget to $17 million, enabling the program to double its impact in 2024.

Read the full op-ed here.

This op-ed builds on the Center's ongoing research on boosting college attainment for all New Yorkers, including the reports *Playing New York City's ACE Card*, *Supporting CUNY's 79,000 Part-Time Students*, and *Opportunity Costs: Affording the True Costs of College in NYC*.

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