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**CSS Study Finds Sharp Drops in Black and Latino Students
at CUNY Senior Colleges after the Recession**

Report Calls for CUNY to Increase Diversity at its Top Colleges

New York, NY, May 23, 2012 — The Community Service Society of New York (CSS) today released a report that examines the enrollment trends of freshmen at the City University of New York (CUNY). Overall, the report found that in a city where more than 70 percent of the high school students are black and Latino, the share and number of black and Latino students is falling in CUNY's senior colleges and, precipitously so, in its most selective schools.

[“Unintended Impacts: Fewer Black and Latino Freshman at CUNY Senior Colleges After the Recession”](#) found that the recession that began in late 2008 in New York City led to more applications to CUNY from students and families hit hard by the economic downturn. As applications increased, CUNY senior colleges raised their minimum admissions requirements, leading to much greater enrollment of students with higher SAT scores. Consequently, the numbers of black and Latino students enrolling as freshmen at the top five CUNY colleges dropped sharply, and also fell at other senior colleges.

By 2010, the top five CUNY colleges were just 10 percent black -- despite the fact that more black high school students than ever are taking the SAT exam. At Baruch College, perhaps the top CUNY school, just six percent of freshmen in 2010 were black. For purposes of comparison, the freshman class at Harvard in 2010 was 11 percent black.

“Youth of color in New York City are being told to prepare for college and making great efforts and strides in doing so, yet the opportunities for them to enroll in a four-year college are diminishing,” said David R. Jones, President and CEO of the Community Service Society. “No one is against high standards. But relegating blacks and Latinos to community colleges only reinforces existing patterns of inequality in our education system. We can do better.”

Latino students, who had made great gains at CUNY senior colleges, particularly at the top five campuses between 2001 and 2008, saw all those gains at top schools erased in just two years.

“It is troubling that not only are black and Latino communities bearing the brunt of fewer job opportunities since the recession, but that they are also losing chances to enroll in CUNY senior colleges,” said Lazar Treschan, CSS Director of Youth Policy and lead author of the report. “We hope that CUNY takes into consideration our analysis and the report’s recommendations in future efforts to address these disparities.”

Blacks and Latinos make up 72 percent of the public high school system, but only 48 percent of CUNY senior college freshmen in 2010 – and just 29 percent at the top five campuses. Most alarmingly, these figures have dropped significantly since 2008.

Although CUNY’s community colleges represent a potential pathway to a four-year degree, their outcomes are not promising: less than one in three students graduate with any type of degree in six years, and just eight percent graduate with a bachelor’s degree within six years.

The CSS report calls for CUNY to do more to increase the presence of black and Latino students at its senior colleges, including its most selective campuses. Among the recommendations are instituting admissions processes, similar to those used by public and private colleges to achieve greater levels of diversity, that consider more than just grade point average and SAT score in a student’s application. Programs at colleges across the country provide support to students with lower scores to help them succeed once on campus – CUNY should invest in similar initiatives as part of a sustained effort to increase black and Latino presence in its senior colleges.

The CSS report examines the enrollment trends of freshmen, so as to understand the options available to graduating high school students. CUNY also accepts a significant number of transfer students, whose enrollment is harder to analyze, given their distinct starting points. However, the same demographic trends hold for transfers, with recent decreases for black and Latino students. Report authors Lazar Treschan and Apurva Mehrotra spent a year gathering and analyzing data for the report, as well as interviewing key stakeholders inside and outside of CUNY.

***The Community Service Society** draws on a 168-year history of excellence in addressing the root causes of economic disparity. As a leading voice on behalf of low-income New Yorkers, CSS responds to urgent, contemporary problems through applied research, advocacy and litigation, and innovative program models that strengthen and benefit all New Yorkers and help promote a more prosperous city. For more information please visit www.cssny.org.*

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