

For immediate release: September 28, 2016

Contacts: John Hutchins, MDRC, 212-340-8604, john.hutchins@mdrc.org

Jeff Robinson, Ohio Department of Higher Education, 614-752-9487, JRobinson@highered.ohio.gov

New Study Shows That Ohio Demonstration Based on CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) Is Off to a Strong Start

Early Impacts on Full-Time Enrollment and Credits Earned on Par with Original Program

(Columbus, Ohio, September 28, 2016) — Three Ohio community colleges are having early success with a program designed to increase students' full-time enrollment, credit accumulation, and persistence and graduation rates.

In 2014, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Cuyahoga Community College, and Lorain County Community College set out to address their low-income students' needs by turning to a proven-effective program: the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) developed by the City University of New York (CUNY).

MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan education and social policy research firm, released encouraging early findings today from a rigorous evaluation of the Ohio demonstration of ASAP. The results were unveiled at a forum sponsored by the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) in Columbus. The Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation provided anchor funding for the demonstration and evaluation, supplemented with grants from a group of other higher education philanthropies.

ASAP requires students to enroll full time and provides comprehensive financial, academic, and support services. Even as ASAP continues to be expanded within the CUNY system (where it will serve 25,000 students in 2018-2019 across nine CUNY colleges), it seemed important to see if the model would be as effective in a different context.

Early findings from MDRC's random assignment evaluation show that the Ohio demonstration of ASAP substantially increased full-time enrollment and credit accumulation during the first semester, as well as persistence and full-time enrollment in the second semester. These results are comparable to early findings from CUNY's ASAP, which was later shown to nearly double the three-year graduation rate for community college students who started with developmental needs.

What Is ASAP?

In 2007, The City University of New York, with the support and funding from the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity, launched Accelerated Study in Associate Programs at all six CUNY community colleges. ASAP requires students to attend college full time and provides them with a rich array of supports for three full years, including enhanced advising, block-scheduled first-year courses, cohort course-taking, tutoring, career services, a tuition gap waiver that covers any need between a student's financial aid and tuition and fees, MetroCards for use on public transportation, and textbook vouchers. ASAP has proven to be one of CUNY's most successful community college initiatives with students in the program

graduating at a rate more than double that of similar students. To date, across six cohorts, ASAP has an average graduation rate of 53 percent vs. 23 percent for comparison group students.

All three colleges in the Ohio demonstration modeled their programs' services after CUNY ASAP and strove to achieve the same goal of doubling graduation rates. While a few program components had to be adjusted to meet the local context, the goal was to come as close to ASAP as possible. Instead of the MetroCards, the three Ohio colleges offer \$50 gift cards for use at local gas and grocery store chains. CUNY provided technical assistance to the colleges, and ODHE coordinated the Ohio ASAP Network, which allowed administrators to share lessons across the three colleges.

What Did the Study in Ohio Find?

The Ohio colleges targeted students who were low-income, college-ready or in need of developmental education, degree seeking, willing to attend full time, and in a major where a degree can be completed within three years. Students could be new to the college or could be continuing students with up to 24 credits. The study compares the Ohio demonstration of ASAP with regular services and classes at the colleges. Key findings from the first two semesters include:

- **The Ohio schools serve predominantly nontraditional students.** Compared with the sample from MDRC's evaluation of CUNY ASAP, students in Ohio are somewhat older (average age 23.1 compared with 21.5), are more likely to be parents (27.0 percent versus 15.3 percent), and are twice as likely to be working (60.0 percent versus 31.3 percent).
- **The Ohio demonstration of ASAP boosted full-time enrollment and semester-to-semester persistence.** In the first semester, students were 17.5 percentage points more likely to enroll full time (84.6 percent vs 67 percent) —meaning that, without the program's support, many more control group students quickly dropped to part-time status. In the second semester, students were more likely to enroll (81.7 percent vs. 69.7 percent) and more likely to enroll full time (72.5 percent vs. 48.5 percent).
- **The Ohio demonstration of ASAP increased the number of credits attempted and earned.** In the first semester, students in the program group attempted and earned 1.4 more credits, on average, than the control group. In the second semester, the impact on credits attempted grows to 2.3 credits, an increase of 28 percent over the control group level of 8.2 credits.

"The fact that the colleges in the Ohio demonstration of ASAP are showing early results that are on par with the original ASAP program at CUNY is extremely encouraging," said Gordon Berlin, President of MDRC. "We look forward to continuing to follow the story in Ohio to learn if they can repeat the unprecedented success of CUNY's community colleges."

"I am pleased that the results that CUNY has had with this program are being reflected in the Ohio model," said ODHE Chancellor John Carey. "The program addresses a real need and has been a win-win for the schools and the students thus far. An increased graduation rate benefits our students, our schools, and our state."

"We are delighted at the impressive early results reported by MDRC at three Ohio community colleges that have modeled their programs on The City University of New York's extraordinarily successful Accelerated Study in Associate Programs," said CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken. "ASAP has been shown to more than double three-year community college graduation rates compared to non-ASAP students at CUNY. We hope the Ohio demonstration of ASAP replicates those exemplary results over the

long term, and that ASAP serves as a model for enhancing student success and increasing graduation rates at community colleges around the country.”

“The comprehensive array of services and supports provided by the ASAP program seems to be a winning combination in helping community college students overcome barriers to graduation,” said Richard D. George, President and Chief Executive Officer of Great Lakes. “We are optimistic that the promising early outcomes of ASAP in Ohio will promote continued success as more students progress on the path to completion.”

The Ohio demonstration of ASAP and MDRC’s evaluation are supported by the Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Lumina Foundation, The Greater Cincinnati Foundation, The Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation, and Strive Partnership KnowledgeWorks.

The report is available on MDRC’s Web site: www.mdrc.org.

* * *

MDRC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization with more than 40 years of experience designing and evaluating education and social policy initiatives. Headquartered in New York City, it has offices in Oakland and Los Angeles, CA, and in Washington, DC.