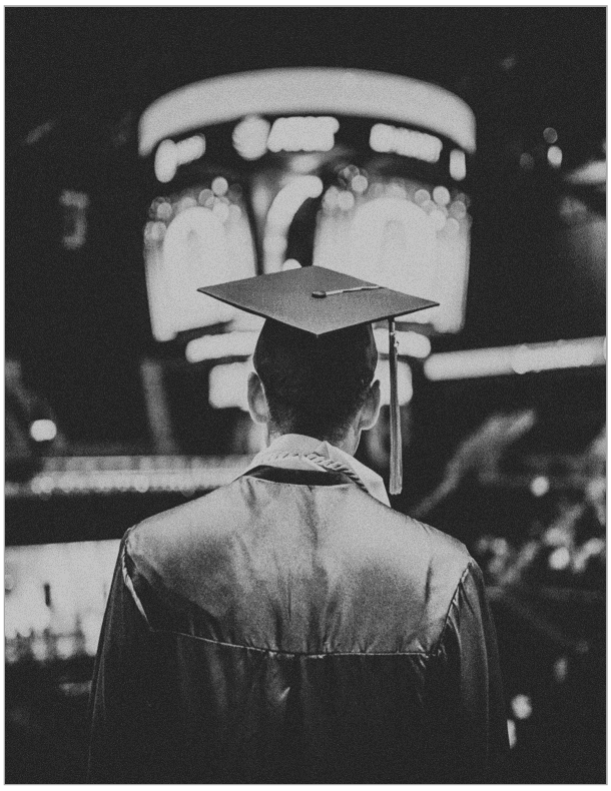
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Report - December 2017

Struggling to the Finish Line: Community College Completion in New York State

While a college credential has become the single most important platform for the middle class today, only one in four New York State residents who enroll in the state's community colleges end up earning a degree.

by Tom Hilliard

New York State's community colleges play a vital role in generating economic mobility for low-income New Yorkers. But the economic boost that community colleges can provide hinges on students finishing what they start. Even as a postsecondary credential becomes the floor to success in today's economy, this report finds that community colleges across the state are struggling to get students to graduation day. This new analysis provides a first look at the latest three-year and six-year graduation rates of all first-time matriculated students at the state's 36 community colleges who started out full-time in their first semester.[1]

Our report finds cause for concern, but also hope:

Graduation rates remain alarmingly low.

- Only 25 percent of the 56,000 students who entered New York State's community colleges in 2013 graduated in three years.
- Just 32 percent of the 60,300 students who entered in 2010 graduated in six years.
- The most recent three-year graduation rate is 26 percent at State University of New York (SUNY) community colleges and 22 percent at City University of New York (CUNY) community colleges.
- The most recent six-year graduation rate is 32 percent at SUNY community colleges and 33 percent at CUNY community colleges.
- At 24 of the state's 36 community colleges, the most recent three-year graduation rate is under 30 percent.
- Only one of the state's 36 community colleges has a three-year graduation rate over 40 percent, and just four boast

graduation rates better than 35 percent.

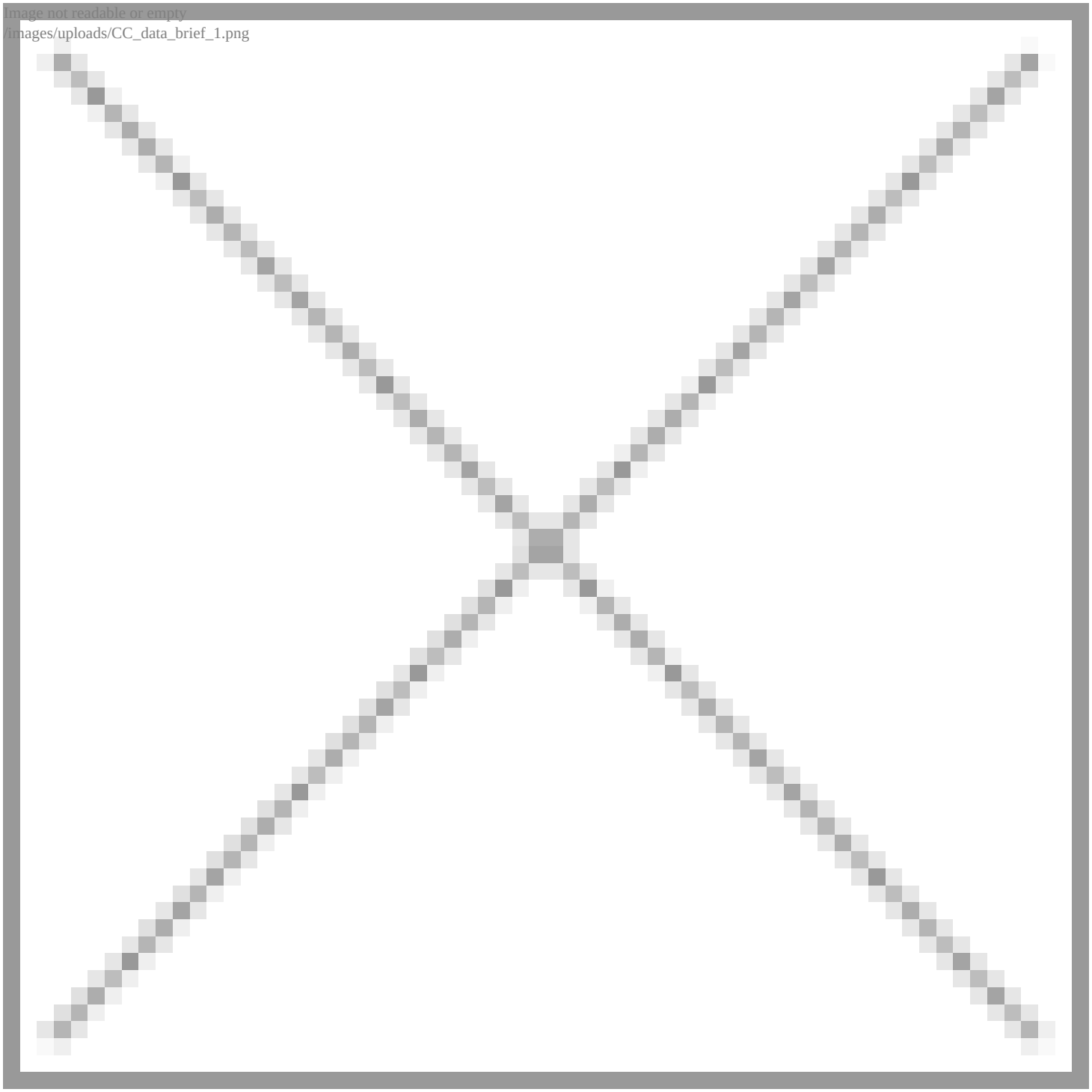
Three-year graduation rates have risen at most colleges, led by gains in the CUNY system. But some schools have slipped.

- The three-year graduation rate at CUNY rose strongly between 2008 and 2016, from 13 percent in 2008 to 22 percent in 2016. All of CUNY's community colleges reported gains over this time period.
- The three-year graduation rate at SUNY rose by 3 percentage points over the same period, from 23 to 26 percent, and most SUNY institutions improved at least slightly.
- However, four SUNY schools—Columbia-Greene (-9 percentage points), Finger Lakes (-4 percentage points), Hudson Valley (-2 percentage points), and Jefferson County (-1 percentage point)—actually saw their graduation rates fall.
- Guttman Community College is a CUNY school that tests promising student success strategies. Guttman must be on to something, because its three-year graduation rate of 44 percent is the state's highest. The next four highest-graduating community colleges are in the SUNY system: Herkimer (38 percent), Jamestown, North Country, and Columbia-Greene (all tied at 36 percent).
- The colleges with the lowest three-year graduation rates include two SUNY colleges—Westchester (17 percent) and Orange (20 percent), and three CUNY colleges: Bronx (16 percent), Borough of Manhattan Community College (19 percent), and Hostos (20 percent).
- The Mohawk Valley region has the state's highest three-year completion rate, at 33 percent. New York City has the lowest, at 22 percent, but also improved more than any other region (9 percentage points) between 2008 and 2016.

More than half of all SUNY community colleges saw six-year graduation rates fall.

- Six-year graduation rates dropped at fifteen SUNY community colleges for the classes entering between 2005 and 2010, most notably Columbia-Greene, which fell from 53 percent to 37 percent. One CUNY community college, Kingsborough, also saw a drop of one percentage point to 37 percent. On the other hand, two SUNY institutions improved more than any others: Sullivan (8 percentage point increase) and Rockland (9 percentage point increase).
- Five of the six CUNY community colleges improved their six-year graduation rates, led by Queensborough with a 7 percentage point increase.
- CUNY's six-year graduation rate equaled SUNY's in 2015 for the first time ever and surpassed it by 1 percentage point in 2016 CUNY's six-year graduation rate increased between 2011 and 2016 from 29 percent to 33 percent, while SUNY's stayed flat at 32 percent.

Note on methodology. Outcomes data on CUNY community colleges is based on administrative data posted to the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment website. Outcomes data on SUNY community colleges was provided by the SUNY Office of Institutional Research and Data Analytics. The completion rates are for matriculated first-time, full-time, associate degree-seeking students in the fall semester of each year who earn an associate or baccalaureate degree within the given reporting period. These rates are reported at the systems level, meaning that a student who transfers from one college to another college in the same system is reported as a graduate. Students who transfer out of the system altogether are not reported here, although some such students will in fact graduate from non-CUNY or non-SUNY colleges.


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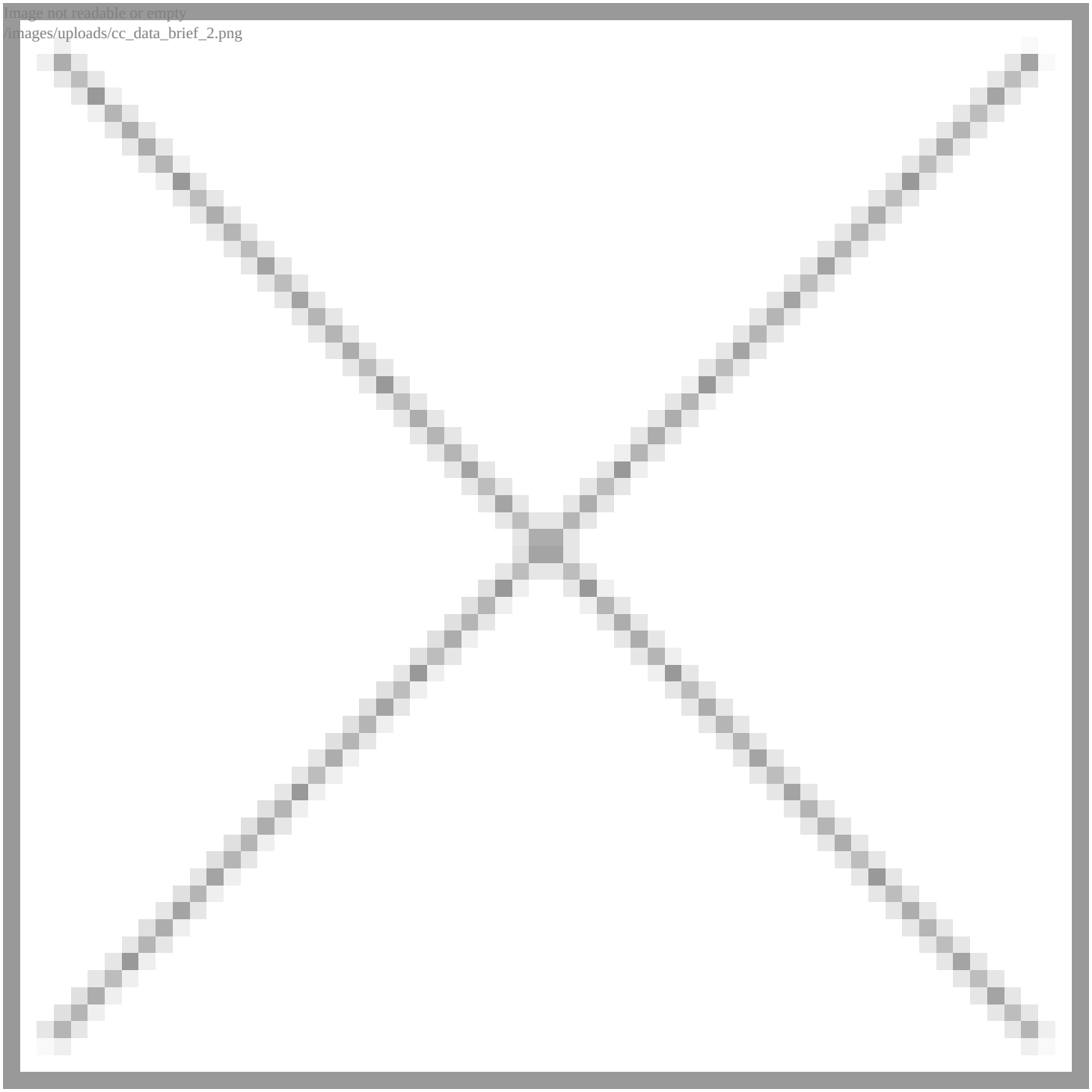
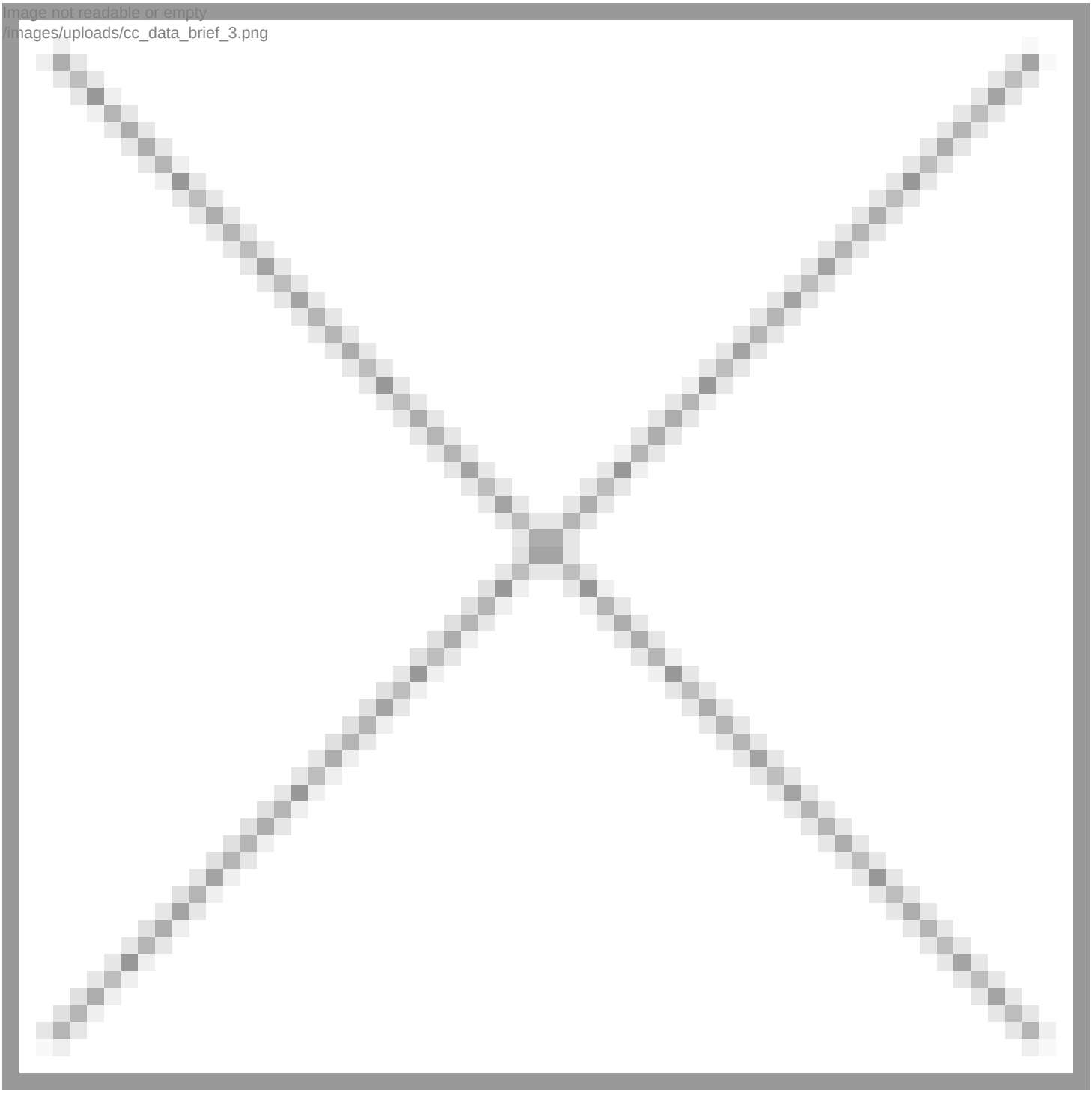

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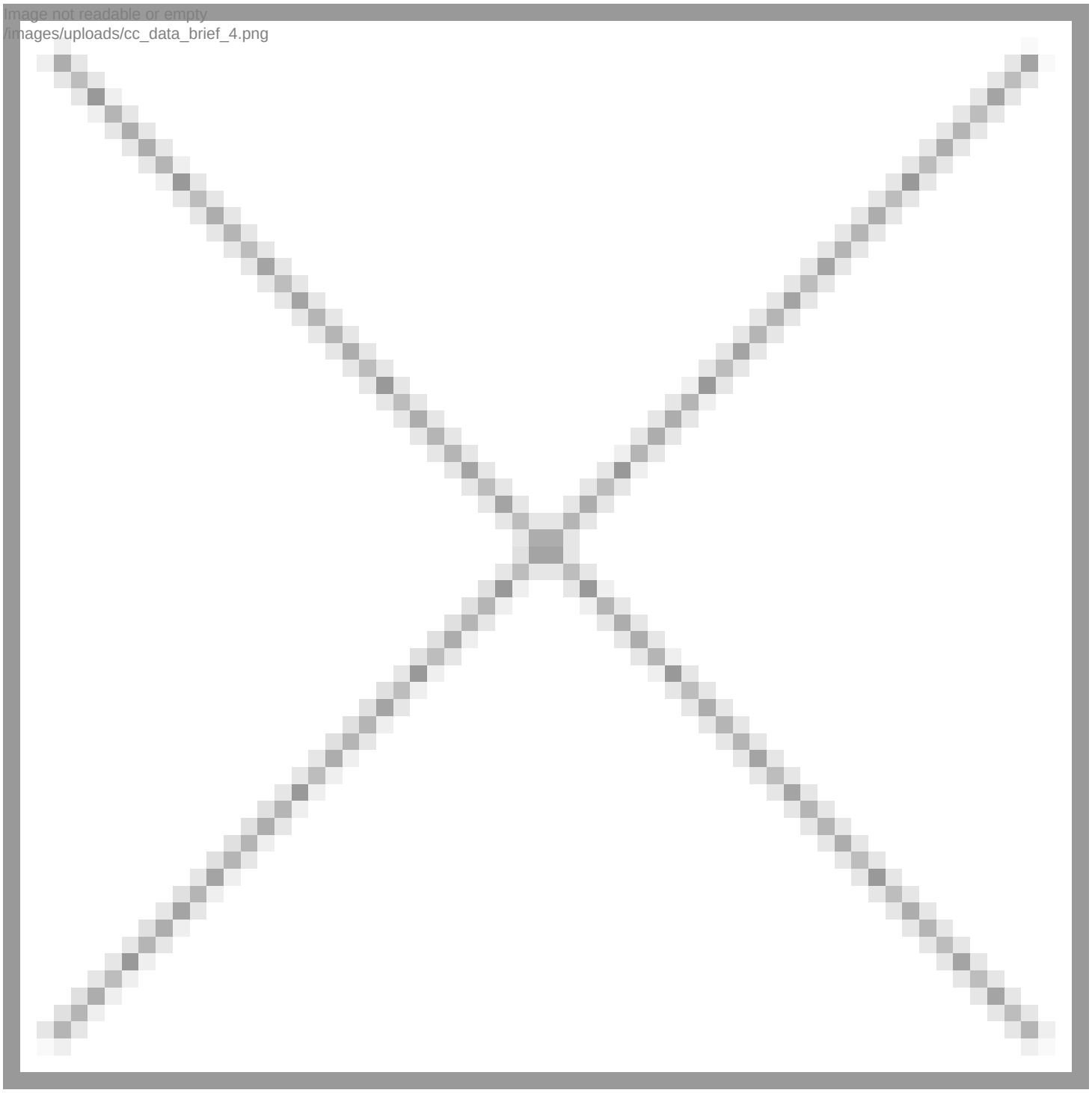


Graduation trends vary significantly by region.

Across New York State's ten regions, community college graduation rates vary widely. Some areas posted substantial gains, while others lost ground.

- The Mohawk Valley region—home to Herkimer, Mohawk Valley and Fulton-Montgomery colleges—boasts the state's highest completion rate (33 percent).
- New York City has the lowest three-year completion rate (22 percent).
- However, New York City also had the steepest improvement in completion rates between 2008 and 2016, rising from

13 to 22 percent. During that time, completion rates in the Capital Region dropped slightly, and rates in the Finger Lakes remained the same, while other regions saw completion rates rise between three and six percentage points.



CAPITAL REGION

- The most recent three-year graduation rate is 26 percent for community colleges in the Capital Region, compared to a statewide average of 25 percent.
- The Capital Region's three-year graduation rate declined 1 percentage point between 2008 and 2016, from 27 percent to 26 percent.

- Graduation rates in the Capital Region were highest at Columbia-Greene (36 percent), followed by Hudson Valley (26 percent), and then Adirondack and Schenectady (both 23 percent).
- Columbia-Greene saw the sharpest decrease in its three-year graduation rate, which dropped from 45 percent to 36 percent.
- Enrollment at community colleges in the region declined 2 percent, from 3,685 first-year students in 2005 to 3,602 in 2016.

CENTRAL NEW YORK

- The most recent three-year graduation rate is 25 percent for community colleges in Central New York, which equals the statewide average.
- The Central New York region's three-year graduation rate increased 4 percentage points between 2008 and 2016, from 21 percent to 25 percent.
- No community college in the region has a graduation rate higher than 27 percent. Graduation rates in Central New York were highest at Cayuga and Tompkins Cortland (both 27 percent) and lowest at Onondaga (23 percent).
- Graduation rates improved at all community colleges in Central New York. Onondaga led with a 5 percentage point increase (from 18 percent to 23 percent). Cayuga and Tompkins Cortland each posted a 4 percentage point increase.
- Enrollment at community colleges in the region increased 44 percent, from 2,168 first-year students in 2005 to 3,126 in 2016—the steepest increase outside New York City.

FINGER LAKES

- The most recent three-year graduation rate is 26 percent for community colleges in the Finger Lakes, compared to a statewide average of 25 percent.
- The Finger Lakes region's three-year graduation rate stayed flat between 2008 and 2016.
- Graduation rates in the Finger Lakes region were highest at Genesee (29 percent), followed by Finger Lakes (28 percent), and Monroe (24 percent).
- Finger Lakes Community College saw a 5 percentage point decline in its graduation rate, from 33 percent to 28 percent. Genesee posted a 2 percentage point gain and Monroe recorded an increase of 1 percentage point.
- Enrollment at community colleges in the region dropped 16 percent, from 5,105 first-year students in 2005 to 4,271 in 2016—tied with the Mohawk Valley region for the steepest new-student enrollment decline in the state.

HUDSON VALLEY

- The most recent three-year graduation rate is 24 percent for community colleges in the Hudson Valley region, one point below the statewide average of 25 percent.
- The Hudson Valley region's three-year graduation rate increased 6 percentage points between 2008 and 2016, from 18 percent to 24 percent. This is the second-fastest increase of any region in the state, behind only New York City.
- Graduation rates in the Hudson Valley were highest at Ulster (33 percent), followed by Rockland and Sullivan (both 28 percent), Dutchess (26 percent), Orange (20 percent), and Westchester (17 percent).
- Westchester posted the second-lowest graduation rate in New York State, after Bronx.
- Every college in the region saw graduation rates increase, led by Ulster (up 12 percentage points from 21 to 33 percent), Sullivan (up 11 percentage points from 17 to 28 percent), Rockland (up 8 percentage points from 20 to 28 percent), Westchester (up 4 percentage points from 13 to 17 percent), Dutchess (up 4 percentage points from 22 to 26

percent), and Orange (up 3 percentage points from 17 to 20 percent).

- Sullivan posted the fifth-fastest graduation rate increase in the state (up 61 percent).
- Ulster is tied with Hostos and North Country for the largest percentage point increase in graduation rate statewide (12 percentage points).
- Enrollment at community colleges in the region increased 9 percent, from 6,021 first-year students in 2005 to 6,573 in 2016, the third-fastest increase in New York State.

LONG ISLAND

- The most recent three-year graduation rate is 24 percent for community colleges on Long Island, compared to a statewide average of 25 percent.
- Long Island's three-year graduation rate increased 4 percentage points between 2008 and 2016, from 20 percent to 24 percent.
- Graduation rates on Long Island were slightly higher at Suffolk (25 percent) than at Nassau (24 percent). Both colleges posted 4 percentage point increases.
- Enrollment at community colleges in the region dropped 9 percent, from 8,255 freshman students in 2005 to 7,509 in 2016.

MOHAWK VALLEY

- The most recent three-year graduation rate is 33 percent for community colleges in the Mohawk Valley, the highest rate in the state and well ahead of the statewide average of 25 percent.
- The Mohawk Valley region's three-year graduation rate increased 5 percentage points between 2008 and 2016, from 28 percent to 33 percent.
- Graduation rates in the Mohawk Valley were highest at Herkimer (38 percent), which posted the second-highest graduation rate in New York State, after Guttman. Fulton-Montgomery came in second in the region (35 percent), and Mohawk Valley came in third (31 percent). Mohawk Valley and the Southern Tier are the only two regions in the state where every community college has a graduation rate above 30 percent.
- In the region, Fulton-Montgomery improved the fastest, rising 9 percentage points (from 26 to 35 percent). Mohawk Valley increased 6 percentage points and Herkimer increased by 4 points.
- Enrollment at community colleges in the region declined 16 percent, from 2,664 first-year students in 2005 to 2,269 in 2016—tied with the Finger Lakes region for the steepest new-student enrollment decline in the state.

NORTH COUNTRY

- The most recent three-year graduation rate is 31 percent for community colleges in the North Country, compared to a statewide average of 25 percent.
- The North Country's three-year graduation rate increased 5 percentage points between 2008 and 2016, from 26 percent to 31 percent.
- Graduation rates in the North Country region were highest at North Country Community College (36 percent), followed by Clinton (32 percent), and Jefferson (28 percent).
- North Country Community College reported the third-highest graduation rate in the state, after Guttman and Herkimer, and tied with Jamestown.
- North Country Community College's graduation rate increased 12 percentage points, tied for the highest increase

statewide (with Ulster and Hostos). Clinton's graduation rate increased 8 percentage points.

- Jefferson saw a decrease in its graduation rate, which dropped from 30 percent to 28 percent.
- Enrollment at community colleges in the region declined 8 percent, from 1,320 first-year students in 2005 to 1,210 in 2016.

SOUTHERN TIER

- The most recent three-year graduation rate is 31 percent for community colleges in the Southern Tier, compared to a statewide average of 25 percent.
- The Southern Tier's three-year graduation rate increased 4 percentage points between 2008 and 2016, from 27 percent to 31 percent.
- Graduation rates in the Southern Tier were even between Broome and Corning (both 31 percent). Broome's graduation rate increased 4 percentage points and Corning's increased by 5 points.
- Enrollment at community colleges in the region increased 7 percent, from 2,168 first-year students in 2005 to 2,329 in 2016.

WESTERN NEW YORK

- The most recent three-year graduation rate is 27 percent for community colleges in Western New York, compared to a statewide average of 25 percent.
- Western New York's three-year graduation rate increased 3 percentage points between 2008 and 2016, from 24 percent to 27 percent.
- Graduation rates in Western New York were highest at Jamestown (36 percent), followed by Niagara (30 percent), and Erie (22 percent).
- Jamestown posted the third-highest graduation rate in the state, after Guttman and Herkimer, and tied with Jamestown.
- Erie has the second-lowest graduation rate of any SUNY community college, after Westchester.
- Jamestown's graduation rate increased 5 percentage points (from 31 to 36 percent) and Erie's rate increased 3 percentage points (from 19 to 22 percent). Niagara's rate remained flat.
- Enrollment at community colleges in the region declined 12 percent, from 4,250 first-year students in 2005 to 3,749 in 2016.

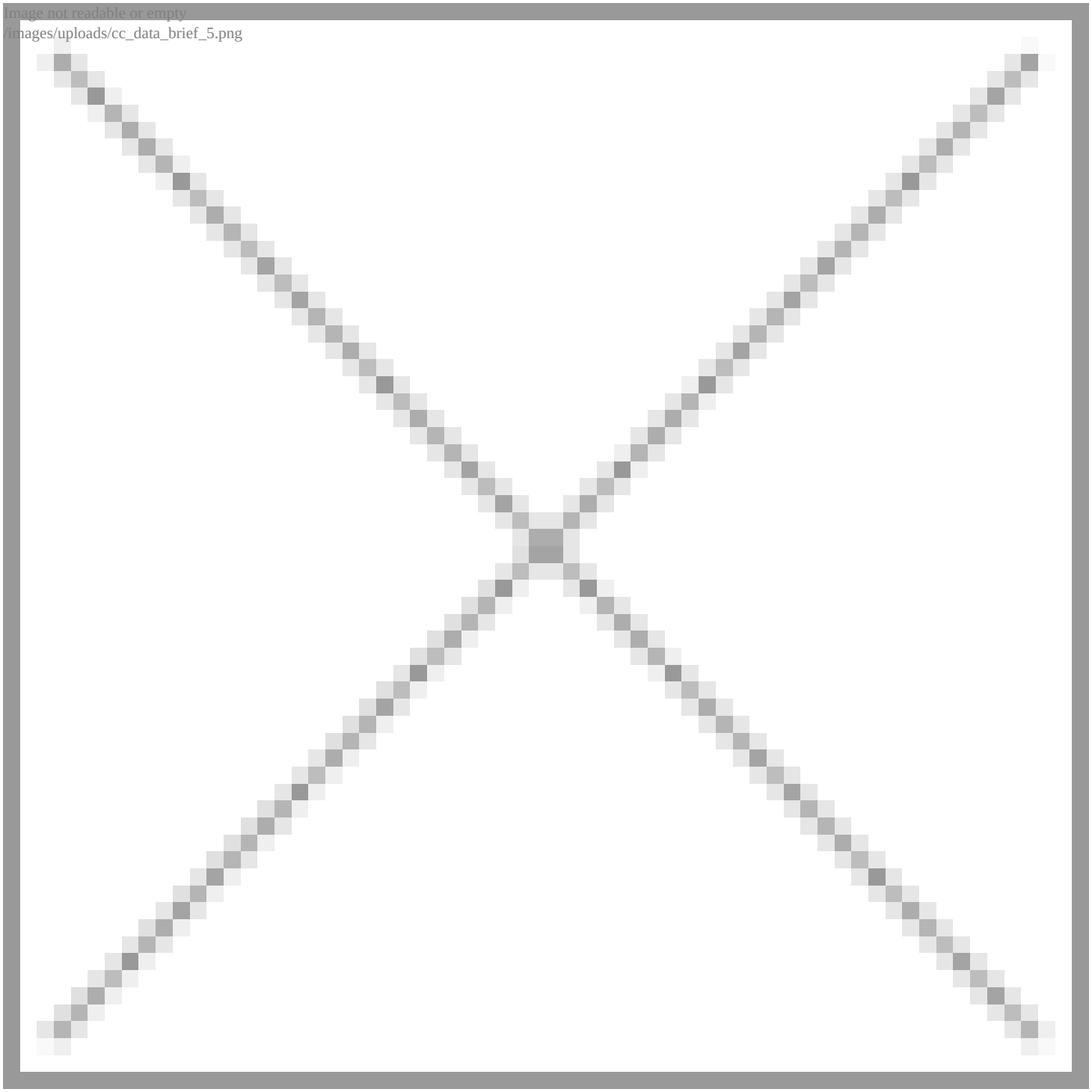
NEW YORK CITY

- The most recent three-year graduation rate is 22 percent for community colleges in the New York City, compared to a statewide average of 25 percent.
- New York City's three-year graduation rate increased 9 percentage points between 2008 and 2016, from 13 percent to 22 percent.
- Graduation rates in New York City were highest at Guttman (44 percent), followed by Kingsborough (28 percent), LaGuardia and Queensborough (both 22 percent), Hostos (20 percent), BMCC (19 percent), and Bronx (16 percent).
- Guttman posted the highest graduation rate in New York State, and Bronx reported the lowest.
- Every college in New York City posted graduation rate gains, led by Hostos (8 to 20 percent) and Bronx (8 to 16 percent). Four of the five fastest-rising graduation rates in the state were in New York City, including Hostos and Bronx, as well as BMCC (11 to 19 percent) and Queensborough (12 to 22 percent).

- Hostos is tied with Ulster and North Country for the largest percentage point increase in graduation rate statewide (12 percentage points).
- Enrollment increased 63 percent, from 10,144 first-year students in 2005 to 16,570 students in 2016—the fastest increase in New York State.

Community college enrollment is up statewide, but many colleges lost students.

- From 2005 to 2016, full-time first-time enrollment grew 12 percent statewide, from 45,780 in 2005 to 51,178 in 2016.
- Virtually all the growth in new community college students came from New York City. The city added 6,426 students, while enrollment in the rest of the state, after accounting for gains and losses in the nine regions, fell by 1,028.
- CUNY's freshman enrollment grew by 63 percent, from 10,144 to 16,570. The Great Recession swelled the classrooms of CUNY community colleges, but the tide never receded.
- SUNY first-year enrollment grew by more than 9,000 students at the peak of the Great Recession to 44,899 in 2010. By 2016, however, enrollment had fallen back to 34,608, just below the enrollment level in 2005. But major shifts took place within the SUNY community college system. Sixteen colleges lost enrollment, 11 gained, and two, Columbia-Greene and Tompkins-Cortland, held steady.
- Borough of Manhattan Community College showed the steepest and largest gain, from 2,687 first-year students in 2005 to 5,805 in 2013 (116 percent). BMCC is New York State's largest community college by enrollment. Onondaga, the community college of Syracuse, came next with a 104 percent gain, rising from 951 to 1,937 freshmen students.
- The steepest drop came at Clinton, which fell 45 percent, from 384 to 212 freshmen students. The largest drop was at Nassau, which fell by 21 percent from 4,393 to 3,450.
- New York City now accounts for 32 percent of the state's full-time first-time community college students, up from 22 percent in 2005.



As this data brief reveals, there are some encouraging trends at community colleges in New York. Statewide, community college graduation rates increased from 20 percent to 25 percent. Yet, three-quarters of full-time students entering the state's community colleges are failing to earn an on-time credential—a clear indication that much more needs to be done to move the needle on student success in New York.

The distressingly low graduation rate across all community colleges in New York is a tragedy for thousands of students each year who leave college without a credential. In today's economy, a college credential has become an indispensable requirement for most well-paying jobs—and New Yorkers who lack one are at an enormous disadvantage. Of equal concern is the impact on private employers, who are deprived of skilled job applicants, and on the state's regional labor markets, which lose a vital impetus to economic prosperity.

Though today's economy increasingly requires workers to have a college credential, more than 7.6 million residents in the state over age 25—57 percent of the state's 25-plus population—lack an associate's degree or higher level of college attainment. According to data from the Working Poor Families Project, this includes more than 1.3 million New Yorkers who have at least some postsecondary education, but left college without a degree.[3]

For working New Yorkers—including adults with full-time jobs, parents with young children, and other nontraditional students—community colleges are crucial springboards to economic mobility. At SUNY's community colleges, 24 percent of students are over age 25, and at CUNY, that figure is 27 percent. More than half of these students are working while attending school, and one in six full-time CUNY community college students—16 percent—is financially responsible for a child. From Buffalo to the Bronx, community colleges are where working New Yorkers turn to boost their skills and credentials and gain a leg up in the workforce.

To give more New Yorkers a path to the middle class and strengthen the state's economy, Governor Cuomo, the State Legislature, and education officials at SUNY and CUNY need to take bold steps to help more New Yorkers succeed at community colleges. To accomplish this goal, Governor Cuomo and the Legislature should create a New York State Student Success Fund: a new pool of money that would empower SUNY and CUNY to implement and expand a host of student success initiatives. These initiatives should include increasing the number of college advisors and nonacademic support staff, designing corequisite instruction models that bypass developmental education, creating emergency microgrants to keep students from dropping out due to sudden crises, and expanding the successful ASAP initiative—both within CUNY and to SUNY campuses.

The state and the college systems should also implement initiatives that, unlike ASAP, can benefit the thousands of part-time community college students. These measures should include removing the barriers that limit access to tuition assistance aid for part-time students, making non-credit courses stackable toward college degree, providing college credit for prior learning outside the college setting, and designing more programs, credentials, and schedules that meet the needs of working students.

The data also reveals an important pattern that should inform policymaking in the state: the CUNY system has engineered a forceful improvement of graduation outcomes across virtually all of its community colleges, proving that progress is possible. If CUNY's student success initiatives are fully funded and supported, these gains are likely to continue.

On the SUNY side, the need for more systemic strategies to boosting college completion is clear. Where CUNY's greatest challenge is the concentrated poverty of its student population, SUNY's is in its far-flung geography and diverse institutional cultures. It is difficult to bring about systems-level change in a network of 30 community colleges that runs the gamut of urban, suburban, and rural economies—sometimes all within the same institution.

SUNY is taking steps to address student success issues within this decentralized framework. In 2015, for example, SUNY implemented Seamless Transfer Policies to create transfer paths across the entire SUNY system. These paths enable students to transfer from a community college to a senior college without losing credits in general education or in the student major. SUNY also made provisions for the assessment and evaluation of its transfer paths, which should enable further improvement over time.

Further accelerating development of coordinated student success strategies would benefit students at SUNY's community colleges, and could result in gains across New York State that mirror the promising improvements in the CUNY system.

For more on this topic, check out:

- *Degrees of Difficulty: Boosting College Success in New York City*, December 2017
- *The New Normal: Supporting Nontraditional Students on the Path to a Degree*, December 2016
- *Completion Day: Keys to Improving Community College Success in New York State*, June 2013

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1 The Fashion Institute of Technology was excluded from this study. Guttman Community College is included in the three-year completion rate findings, but not in the six-year completion rate findings, since it will not report a six-year graduation rate for another two years.
2 Enrollment figures reflect all full-time community college students. In 2013, 61 Approximately 69 percent of CUNY's community college students are were enrolled full time, as are roughly 54were 57 percent of SUNY's community college students.
3 Population Research Bureau analysis of 2015 American Community Survey microdata, commissioned by the Working Poor Families Project.

Three-Year Graduation Rate, 2008–2016, CUNY and SUNY Community Colleges

COLLEGE	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change (Rate)	Change (%)
CUNY	13%	13%	16%	14%	16%	16%	17%	21%	22%	9%	66%
SUNY	23%	23%	22%	23%	22%	23%	24%	25%	26%	3%	13%
State	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%	22%	24%	25%	5%	23%
BMCC	11%	13%	14%	12%	15%	15%	16%	19%	19%	8%	147%
BRONX	8%	7%	8%	8%	10%	11%	11%	16%	16%	9%	110%
GUTTMAN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50%	44%	-	-
HOSTOS	8%	11%	12%	8%	11%	12%	13%	21%	20%	12%	83%
KINGSBOROUGH	22%	21%	25%	22%	22%	19%	24%	26%	28%	6%	29%
LAGUARDIA	15%	13%	15%	14%	17%	17%	16%	20%	22%	8%	52%
QUEENSBOROUGH	12%	12%	15%	14%	16%	19%	18%	22%	22%	10%	83%
ADIRONDACK	20%	22%	21%	22%	21%	20%	18%	26%	23%	3%	17%

COLLEGE	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change (Rate)	Change (%)
BROOME	27%	29%	27%	31%	26%	27%	27%	30%	31%	4%	13%
CAYUGA COUNTY	24%	20%	23%	30%	27%	23%	28%	25%	27%	3%	14%
CLINTON	24%	26%	26%	29%	22%	20%	31%	28%	32%	8%	35%
COLUMBIA-GREENE	45%	38%	33%	43%	28%	30%	33%	31%	36%	-9%	-21%
CORNING	26%	27%	25%	29%	27%	26%	28%	28%	31%	5%	19%
DUTCHESS	22%	26%	25%	26%	25%	25%	26%	25%	26%	4%	20%
ERIE	19%	20%	19%	22%	20%	20%	23%	22%	22%	3%	14%
FINGER LAKES	33%	33%	32%	31%	28%	28%	28%	25%	28%	-4%	-13%
FULTON-MONTGOMERY	26%	29%	31%	33%	30%	27%	30%	32%	35%	9%	35%
GENESEE	27%	28%	32%	29%	28%	28%	29%	29%	29%	2%	6%
HERKIMER COUNTY	34%	30%	32%	34%	32%	29%	31%	37%	38%	4%	12%
HUDSON VALLEY	29%	28%	26%	27%	26%	24%	27%	27%	26%	-2%	-7%
JAMESTOWN	31%	34%	36%	34%	31%	34%	32%	35%	36%	5%	16%
JEFFERSON	30%	29%	27%	31%	29%	24%	29%	28%	28%	-1%	-4%
MOHAWK VALLEY	25%	23%	24%	25%	24%	22%	26%	29%	31%	6%	23%
MONROE	23%	24%	24%	26%	24%	22%	25%	23%	24%	1%	3%
NASSAU	20%	18%	17%	16%	20%	20%	23%	22%	24%	3%	17%
NIAGARA COUNTY	30%	31%	31%	31%	28%	27%	25%	28%	30%	1%	2%

COLLEGE	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change (Rate)	Change (%)
NORTH COUNTRY	24%	30%	23%	27%	23%	20%	23%	27%	36%	12%	50%
ONONDAGA	18%	17%	17%	18%	19%	20%	23%	22%	23%	4%	25%
ORANGE COUNTY	17%	15%	19%	21%	19%	18%	19%	24%	20%	3%	18%
ROCKLAND	20%	17%	25%	23%	26%	24%	28%	29%	28%	8%	42%
SCHENECTADY	20%	22%	20%	22%	21%	18%	18%	22%	23%	3%	14%
SUFFOLK COUNTY	21%	18%	18%	21%	20%	20%	21%	22%	25%	4%	20%
SULLIVAN COUNTY	17%	17%	15%	20%	18%	23%	22%	26%	28%	11%	61%
TOMPKINS CORTLAND	22%	21%	25%	25%	23%	24%	26%	27%	27%	5%	24%
ULSTER COUNTY	21%	26%	28%	20%	25%	25%	28%	31%	33%	13%	60%
WESTCHESTER	13%	14%	12%	13%	13%	14%	13%	15%	17%	4%	31%
CUNY	13%	13%	16%	14%	16%	16%	17%	21%	22%	9%	66%
SUNY	23%	23%	22%	23%	22%	23%	24%	25%	26%	3%	13%
STATE	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%	22%	24%	25%	5%	23%

This brief is funded by the **Working Poor Families Project**, a national initiative supported by the Annie E. Casey and Joyce Foundations, which partners with nonprofit organizations in 23 states to investigate policies that could better prepare working families for a more secure economic future, and **The Clark Foundation**.

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Researched and written by Tom Hilliard. Edited by Eli Dvorkin.

Center for an Urban Future (CUF) is an independent, nonprofit think tank that generates innovative policies to create jobs, reduce inequality and help lower income New Yorkers climb into the middle class. For 20 years, CUF has published accessible, data-driven reports on ways to grow and diversify the economy and expand opportunity that are anchored in rigorous research, not preconceived notions about outcome. Our work has been a powerful catalyst for policy change in New

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City University of New York Struggles to Fill Top Job

The Wall Street Journal, by Melissa Korn, January 09, 2019

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