

GENERAL FACULTY REPORT
Enrollment Management & Strategic Academic Initiatives
Spring 2020

The Division of Enrollment Management and Strategic Academic Initiatives is responsible for the oversight of the offices of Undergraduate Advisement and Orientation, Financial Aid Services, International Student Services, Registrar, Testing and Evaluation, Housing, SEEK and Undergraduate Admissions which all play integral roles in managing the enrollment and programming for the College's undergraduate and graduate student populations.

Enrollment

Baruch's total enrollment for the Spring 2020 term is 18,361, a record high for spring. This number comprises 15,237 undergraduates and 3124 graduate students. We welcomed 106 new first year students, 1354 new transfer students, and 419 new graduate students.

Recruitment and Admissions

As of March 5, freshman applications to Baruch are up 16% over this time last year (and already exceed our final application count by more than 10%), and we expect to enroll a large, diverse, high quality entering class for the Fall 2020 semester. By contrast, transfer applications for the Fall are down almost 6% compared to this time last year, though the transfer cycle extends longer into the spring and summer and final outcomes are yet to be determined.

For the first time, students applying to Baruch had the option to apply via the CUNY application in CUNYfirst, which debuted approximately 18 months ago, or via the Common App. Common App is a not-for-profit member organization committed to the pursuit of access, equity, and integrity in the college admission process. Each year, more than one million students, one-third of whom are first-generation, apply to college through the Common App's online application. By becoming a Common App member, Baruch College streamlines the application process for students interested in applying to multiple institutions, and gains exposure to students who may not have otherwise considered Baruch.

Baruch's Common App launched in early September, and closed for the Fall semester on February 1; during that time, we received well over 5000 applications via this platform. Students may still apply for the Fall semester via the CUNY application. We attribute the increase in applications overall to the move to make the Common App an option for students. This development does not come without its challenges, however, as the two pools of applicants must be merged in CUNYfirst, and no data paths exist between the two systems. The undergraduate admissions and enrollment data management staffs are executing a very labor-intensive and time-sensitive process to meet our admissions decisions deadlines for all applicants.

Enrollment Marketing and Communications

CRM

Enrollment Management functions university-wide have been working under profoundly difficult conditions for several months due to an enormous service failure on the part of our Customer Relationship Management vendor. Below are excerpts from an email from Executive Vice Chancellor Jose Luis Cruz, sent 27 February 2020, explaining the problem:

On December 9, 2019, Admissions US (formerly known as Hobsons, Inc.) a wholly owned subsidiary of Campus Management Corp. (CM), the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform that CUNY uses to communicate with prospective and current undergraduate and graduate students, informed the CUNY user community that the IP addresses used to generate emails for its North American-based clients had been blacklisted by the spam filtering service Spamhaus Project (<https://www.spamhaus.org/>). The result of this action made emails from the CM platform undeliverable, adversely affecting enrollment operations across the University and more than 700 other colleges and universities in the northeastern United States. As of today, the matter is unresolved. [...]

Contractual Situation

CUNY's contract with CM, which began in 2011, expired on October 14, 2019, and included service level agreement (SLA) terms. The problems that the University encountered last fall would not have been resolved by the SLA terms included in the contract.

Permission to extend the contract for two years was requested and approved by Board of Trustees before the current difficulties started, and the contract extension agreement is currently awaiting execution by the vendor. The reason for pursuing an extension is the need to continue to provide the University with access to other product CRM functions that are not currently affected by this issue (for communication, event management, and graduate admission application processing) while the University initiates a public solicitation process to procure a new CRM on the open market. As of the new year, new solicitation requirements have been completed, but in light of the current situation, are being re-evaluated by CUNY Enrollment Management.

Current Mitigation Efforts

Several actions have been taken to resolve the problem with Spamhaus and to mitigate the effect of the outage on University-wide enrollment efforts. CM has worked with the University Admissions Office and the campuses to validate and purge email addresses across all CUNY instances of Connect/Retain/ApplyYourself. In addition, CM has offered CUNY a credit for 50,000 text messages with pre-approval for 50,000 more that can be allocated as necessary across the University. [...]

Corrective Actions Underway

- 1. The University Admissions Office is working closely with CM and CUNY CIS to get off the blacklist and regain full functionality of the CM platform. This includes taking full advantage of the existing offer of credit for text messaging and implementing best practices for email validation across the University. CM already has added new email domains and associated IP addresses and is starting to move customers to these new domains as quickly as possible. [...]*
- 2. If needed, University will leverage an existing contract with Constant Contact through an expedited procurement process to expand our email service, thus providing an alternative tool to communicate with students.*
- 3. [...] If not using another email provider or Constant Contact, the University will use its limited funds to pay for or to offset campus postage costs*
- 4. The University Admissions Office, Procurement, and Legal are working diligently to accelerate the timeline on the Request for Proposals (RFP) public solicitation process to procure and implement a new CRM commensurate with our mission and aspirations as a University....*

At Baruch, we are currently using Constant Contact, a mass email delivery service, to inform our students of acceptance and have implemented a communication plan around next steps to matriculation for new undergraduates. Additionally, we are continuing the practice of mailing hard-copy acceptance packets to newly admitted first year students. EMSAI also makes use of a separate texting contract to communicate with both current and prospective students. We believe that at the undergraduate level our communication work-arounds will be sufficient to avoid a catastrophic enrollment yield occurrence for Fall 2021. The impact of this situation will mainly be felt by a loss of critical enrollment funnel data on which we base predictive modeling for future classes.

Because of different recruitment timelines and business practices, however, the CRM failure may have a much more severe impact on new graduate enrollments.

Registration

CUNY has launched a new student schedule application called Schedule Builder. Schedule Builder is a real-time scheduling software that enables students to plan and register for courses that meet their schedules and other needs. With this application, students can easily arrange class schedules that fit their personal and academic lives. Schedule Builder will be optional for students at Baruch for the Summer/Fall 2020 registration period but will become universal starting with the Winter/Spring 2021 registration period.

In addition, CUNY is planning to launch a new room scheduling software application in July. It is also expected to assist in predicting course offerings to assist students in achieving timely graduation.

Advisement

This fall, the office of Undergraduate Advisement and Orientation rolled out the use of AdvisorTrac, a web-based 24-hour access scheduling system. The system provides students with the opportunity to schedule 15-minute or 30-minutes advising sessions with one of the college's nine academic advisors. Using the appointment-based system, the Advisement staff advised 9,161 students between October 2019 and March 1, 2020. During the first three weeks of October – peak advisement time for Spring registration – the advisors were able to increase the number of student advised by 18% over the same time period during the previous year.

In addition to the one-on-one appointment delivery model of advisement, the office is working towards enhancing the Academic Momentum initiative. As a part of the 15/30 initiative, a team of two advisors reviewed and replied to 1,009 three-semester planners submitted by our Fall 2019 freshman class. Program degree maps were recently updated to reflect curriculum changes; degree map page views were 9,024 between October 2019 and January 2020.

Financial Aid Services

In efforts to better serve our student body, Financial Aid Services set up a mobile office on the 2nd floor of the Vertical Campus, welcoming students to the Bearcat Den for pizza and financial aid chats with professional staff. Over sixty students visited the two-day event, entitled "Ask Betty," and were met with individualized guidance regarding their financial aid status. Since the event, over 200 additional students filed their 2020-2021 FASFA. The initiative is leading the way for stronger student-facing efforts within Enrollment Management & Strategic Academic Initiatives, with plans for other divisional offices to provide these "pop-up" experiences for students.

BMI

The Black Male Initiative (BMI) is a University-wide student development initiative focused on increasing matriculation, retention and graduation rates of underrepresented students, particularly men of color. BMI @ Baruch is one expression of the College's commitment to access and diversity. BMI projects are open to all academically eligible students, faculty and staff, without regard for race, gender or national origin. Beginning this spring, two new staff members joined the BMI @Baruch team. Kamal Walker, a current graduate student in the Master of International Affairs program at Marxe, is a CUNY BA alumnus, and a former BMI student, and comes to us with wide-ranging experience partnering with community-based organizations serving the needs of young black men. Joseph (PJ) Hill is also a CUNY BA alumnus, and has worked extensively within the CUNY community, both as a participant in the BMI program at Queens College and with Baruch's College Now-STEM Collaborative Program. Both have extensive experience with student-facing initiatives and possess a deep commitment to see students achieve long-term success.

Success Network

For the past five years, the Success Network program has offered a three-day summer Boot Camp program for incoming first-year students from underrepresented populations, in particular Black and Latinx students. Focusing on social and academic integration, Boot Camp offers workshops focusing on academic readiness, peer mentoring sessions, and community building activities to assist students as they transition to college life. In efforts to provide this opportunity to as many first year students as possible, this January the program launched a Winter Boot Camp program held on January 23 and 24, 2020. 45 new students were added to the 2019-2020 cohort, bringing the total number of new, first-year Success students to a total of 186.

CUNY Proficiency Index

The City University of New York (CUNY) mandated changes in the practices for assigning students to developmental or remedial courses effective for the spring 2020 entering class. The criteria to determine proficiency standards, and enrollment in credit-bearing or developmental education interventions in Math and English courses are now based on high school academic records (both courses taken and grades), Regent exam scores, as well as SAT scores. Applicants for spring 2020 were evaluated using the new guidelines also called the CUNY Proficiency Index.

Baruch's Departments of English and Mathematics developed new course placement rubrics to align with the established guidelines. These rubrics were implemented for the spring 2020 incoming class. A total of 2,771 students were placed into courses using the rubrics.