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I have been working for the ASAP Program since 2012 and have seen how budget cuts over the years have already dwindled this program down to a shell of what it was. It has become increasingly more difficult to meet our goal of graduating 50% of our students within 3yrs, primarily because we are incapable of providing the support & opportunities that we once did. When I started working for ASAP, we were able to provide numerous activities for students, including Broadway show trips, trips to a variety of businesses (so students could learn about different types of careers), ASAP sections of classes (smaller size & meetings with professors), ASAP orientations with outside groups, as well as numerous on campus activities. What this provided was exposure to experiences that students may not normally have and a more hands-on college experience.

With the decline of funding over the years, we have seen a significant drop in student graduation rates. Without the extra experiences and events, students lack the connection to the college, peers, and the ASAP program. Where we once easily graduated 50% within 3 years, has now become a struggle where we are often falling short of our goal. This is despite our best efforts to provide opportunities and activities with a reduced budget.

With the reduction in our budget in December 2022, we were unable to provide funding for all students taking Winter section courses and were unable to provide book stipends or Metrocards for these students as well. For several students, this led to them being unable to successfully complete their Winter course(s). We've already begun to tell our students to expect the same for Summer.

The ASAP Program has been studied and replicated across the country & has been touted as a means by which to reduce student loans, increase graduation rates, and actually save the government millions of dollars every year. Sadly, like nearly every government funded program that improves the lives of its citizens, funding has been reduced to drastic levels, rendering the program ineffective. One has to wonder why our government continues to diminish the opportunities for its citizens, especially one who was designed to help our minority populations.