Executive Summary

In a first effort by the enrollment management area to understand the application population, surveys were sent to BMCC applicants and new students in November of 2016. Response rates were low for both groups, especially for the BMCC new student population. Nevertheless, nearly 500 individuals completed the survey. The top reasons for applying to BMCC were majors offered and location. Affordability and the diversity of the student population were more important among the BMCC students than for those not attending the college. One quarter of all those not attending BMCC chose to provide an open-ended answer to this question, more often explaining why they did not attend than addressing why they applied. 70% of those not enrolled in BMCC were not enrolled in higher education, and 188 of these provided their contact information to reconnect to BMCC, and were still interested in attending. Among new students enrolled in the college 90% were confident in their degree choice and 85% in knowing the steps they had to take to enroll for the next semester. Advisors were seen as helpful or very helpful by over 87% of this group.

Students who are attending other colleges instead of BMCC provided open-ended answers explaining their choice. Four categories of responses were found:

- Better/more convenient location
- Specific programs or majors
- Preferred a 4-year college
- Wanted to go away for college.

Those who were not attending college in fall 2016 were asked to identify barriers to college enrollment. The most common selections were needing a job and not feeling ready for college. However, “other” responses not listed in the survey were more common that these; about one-third of the students felt compelled to provide their own explanations. Both surveys asked respondents to identify areas in the registration process that could be improved. About 40% reported that placement testing and registering for classes are two areas that could be improved. About 30% suggested that improvements could be made to the orientation sessions and only about 10% selected access to support services as an area for improvement. Applying for financial aid was seen as needing improvement by over half the students who are not currently enrolled in college.

The Surveys

In fall 2016, two new surveys were launched by the BMCC Enrollment Management area. The purpose was to gain a clearer perspective on the needs and motivations of students applying to
BMCC. One survey was for students who had been accepted at BMCC but who did not register for classes in the fall. The other was for new students who had registered for fall classes. Both surveys were launched on November 7 and closed on December 12. However for the survey of those not enrolled, 88% of the responses came on the first day, while for the survey of new students, only 1/3 of the responses came on the first day, and 60% came after a reminder one week later. A few other responses came in the subsequent weeks. Links to the online survey were sent by the Enrollment Management staff through the Hobsons Connect communication system. Data from Hobsons showed that 12,498 non-enrolled and 5,088 the BMCC enrolled applications received the email about the survey. Open rates for the emails were 40% for the non-registered group and 43% for the BMCC students. Response rates are quite low, particularly for the BMCC students, where only 4% of those who opened the email completed the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Received email message</th>
<th>Applicants who did not register</th>
<th>New BMCC students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12,498</td>
<td>5,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of prior level</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opened email message</td>
<td>4,969</td>
<td>2,172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of prior level</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Survey</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of prior level</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Motivations for Applying to BMCC

**Why did you apply to BMCC?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Not Attending BMCC</th>
<th>Attending BMCC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majors and Career Programs Offered</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was certain to be accepted at BMCC</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The diversity of the student population</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMCC’s Academic Recommendation</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family recommendation</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please explain)</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1. Comparing reasons for applying among BMCC applicants who did and did not attend the college.*
Students in both surveys were asked why they applied and were invited to select any or all from a set of multiple choice responses, and to supply their own “other” reasons for applying. The chart in Figure 1, above, shows the percentage among those answering the question who selected each of the responses. Many students selected multiple responses.

Students who are currently attending BMCC are more attracted by its affordability and the diversity of its student body than those applicants who did not attend, and were generally inclined to select among the multiple choice items, with Majors and Career Programs Offered as the opt reason, followed by Locations, selected by almost half the students, and Affordability. In contrast, those who are not enrolled at BMCC seemed to offer more “other” reasons for applying, with 107 students taking the opportunity to write in comments. However, 68% of these open-ended comments did not address the question of why the students had applied but rather the reasons they had not registered at BMCC. In addition, 20% stated that they still planned or hoped to come to BMCC. Only 12% of the students offering open-ended comments focused on reasons they had applied in the first place. (See Figure 2, below.)

Among the 12% whose open-ended answers were about their reasons for applying, these examples stand out:

- My college counselor made me and I didn't care for any of the CUNY schools anyway so I just let it happen.
- Good way to go to transfer to hunter

The responses that focused on why they did not attend BMCC are covered with later questions where this was specifically asked.
BMCC Students

BMCC students only were asked how confident they were that they had made the correct degree choice. About 90% of the students felt confident or very confident in their degree choice. This is good news, although there is less clarity about whether the students believe they are in the right major, or if they are confident in their choice to pursue an Associate’s degree. Slightly fewer (85%) were confident that they knew what steps to take to enroll in the spring. See Figure 3, below.

![Figure 3](image)

**Figure 3. BMCC Student confidence in their choice of degree and knowledge of next steps to enroll for spring**

Those who were not confident were offered the chance to explain why they felt unconfident.

- I chose unconfident because for my first semester it is quite difficult. I am not really sure if I want to continue with accounting. I would like to see and know more about my other options.

- Because nobody told me what was needed for me to get ready for next semester

- I am very unconfident because I am enrolled in bmcc but I didn't attend for certain reasons so now I cannot start the next semester until I pay for the classes from this semester.

Advisement

The newly enrolled students were also asked about advisement. (See Figure 4 below.) Over 87% of the students found their advisors helpful or very helpful. Of the 10 students who chose unhelpful or very unhelpful, 7 provided additional explanations such as these examples:
• I don't even know who is my advisor

• She doesn't have much knowledge about Bmcc and course. She did not advice me on any alternative class. She didn’t give me much choice

![Bar chart showing the level of helpfulness of advisors.](image-url)

**Figure 4. BMCC students rated the level of helpfulness of their advisors**

### Students Not Enrolled at BMCC

Among the respondents, some 70% of those who had applied but did not enroll at BMCC did not enroll anywhere else. Most had not applied outside of the CUNY system.

**Table 1. Proportion of Respondents Applying Outside of CUNY and Enrolling in other Colleges.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you apply to colleges outside of the CUNY system?</th>
<th>Did you enroll in another college?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>Yes: 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No: 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>Yes: 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No: 58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>Yes: 119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No: 278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 397</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When students indicated that they had enrolled at another college, the survey then asked them in an open-ended question why they had chosen that other school.

Typical responses to this question included the following:

- They had a major such as vet tech
- I liked the program option at LaGuardia Community College better for the theater program. It is also easier to get to.
- Because the one I’m attending is closer to home and has easier transportation.
- I want to go to four years college.
- I wanted to go away and play football

**Barriers to College Enrollment**

Those who did not indicate that they enrolled in another college were asked “If you did not enroll in higher education this fall, please indicate if any of the following were a barrier to attendance:” with six choices plus an option for an open-ended “other” choice. Among the 240 people who answered this question, the most selected barrier was “Other (please explain).” After that the next two barriers were “I needed to take a job” and “I didn’t feel ready for college,” each selected by more than ¼ of the respondents. Only 6% of those responding indicated that they had childcare issues. See Figure 6, below.
Only 14% selected the option, “The enrollment process was too difficult.” However, 19 students (24% of those providing open-ended responses to the question) mentioned items issues to do with registration issues. Only two of these students also checked “The enrollment process was too difficult.” This suggests that the applicants who aren’t in college did not apparently consider a broad overview of all that is needed to enroll in BMCC as the enrollment process, and a missing transcript, a missed deadline, issues with financial aid, and course scheduling processes were considered as discrete problems that kept them from entering college.

Categories of “other” responses from this question included the following:

- In college-prep programs* (27%)
- Registration Process (24%)
- Still want to attend BMCC (18%)
- Personal issues including health* (12%)
- Not yet graduated from high school* (8%)

* These were also common reasons among those responding to the “Why did you apply” question who focused on why they didn’t come to BMCC.

The registration process stands out among the “other” items in this list as an area that enrollment management can target for improvement. If we exclude the students attending CUNY-based college preparation programs as already being served by the campus, then the enrollment and registration
process seems like not have been included in this survey. In prior terms, most students who finish these programs have enrolled in BMCC in a later term. Similarly, students who failed to graduate from high school in June are not eligible to attend until they successfully graduate, though BMCC might be able to better assist those who graduate from high school at the end of summer.

Reading responses like these, however, suggests that registering for college involves a number of steps that require the student to identify and gather documents from various places, face some bureaucratic hurdles, understand what’s required, and meet strict deadlines.

- The times I needed to take my required courses interfered with my job schedule. Also I kept getting notifications that there were issues with my financial aid. Your office did not help me resolve the issue.
- I took the test too late so when college started I couldn't enroll until the spring (also selected enrollment process item)
- I didn't realize I was accepted
- waiting for sat scores
- I needed to retrieve a transcript from a previous college.
- I had to take off a semester because of immigration status so I am willing to start next semester.
- Mistaken to be deceased

**Improving the Registration Process**

Both surveys asked students about how the registration process could be improved through a multiple choice selection where students could select as many areas for improvement as they wished. The chart in Figure 6 shows the percentage within each of three groups of students who identified the listed areas as needing improvement. BMCC enrolled students are shown by the gray line, and among those not attending BMCC, those attending another college are shown by the orange line and those not attending college are shown by the blue line.

There is broad agreement among about 40% of each group that placement testing and registering for classes are two areas that could be improved. About 50% suggest that improvements could be made to the orientation sessions and only about 10% selected access to support services as an area for improvement.

Activating the CUNYFirst account seems more problematic for those attending other colleges than for either the BMCC students or those not attending college, while applying for financial aid is seen as needing improvement by more than half the students who are not attending college and by about 30% of those attending either BMCC or another college. Finally, “Finding out if you are accepted” was seen as needing improvement by almost 40% of those attending other colleges, and by about ¼ of those not attending college, but only by 12% of those attending BMC. (See Figure 7, on page 2.)
Wanting to Reconnect to BMCC

Fourteen students (about 18% of those selecting “other” barriers to attendance) are still planning to attend BMCC, which probably includes the 20% of students who expressed continued interest in BMCC when asked why they applied to BMCC. Here are some of the comments:

- I got pregnant and decided to start class in next semester.
- delayed graduation process, still interested in going when i graduate in January
- Waiting on information for the Spring I am a transfer student.
- I moved and things got lost with time, reappld for the Spring 2017 classes
- I currently go to Bronx community college but I was accepted for the spring of 2017

Those not currently enrolled in any college were asked if they would like to reconsider enrolling and if so, if BMCC could connect them with an academic advisor here. 225 (88%) said “yes” and 188, or 83% of those who said “yes,” provided their contact information.
Improving the Surveys

Some issues were found with students who may have been confused by the language. For example, students who said “Yes” that they enrolled in another college but apparently meant that they applied to another college. All questions should be reviewed to ensure that the language avoids any terminology that may only be familiar to students once they are in college. In addition, it may be helpful after questions that direct students to another page based on their answer to provide information before the next question on how they can go back if they selected the wrong answer. For example, on the questions for students who said “Yes” they enrolled in another college, before asking them to explain why they chose that other college, the survey could include a statement such as “You said you are attending a college other than BMCC. If this is not correct, please use the back button on your browser to change your response.”

Students who have enrolled in CUNY Start, CLIP, or BLIIS should be removed from the survey since this created confusion about whether or not they see themselves as in college. Similarly, the question that asked students if they would like to speak with an advisor resulted in fairly large number of students agreeing to be contacted, but in many cases their questions were about financial aid or another aspect of the process. It may make sense to have the call center or other first responder staff work with the students to redirect their inquiries to the appropriate departments.
Appendix

Appendix 1:

8 Survey Questions for Students Who Attend BMCC

Q1 Please indicate why you chose to apply to BMCC. (Check all that apply.)

- Majors and Career Programs
- Location
- Affordability
- The diversity of the student
- BMCC’s Academic
- Family recommendation
- I was certain to be accepted at
- Other (please explain)

Q2 Please indicate what portions of the application and registration process could be improved? (Please select all that apply)

- Placement testing
- Activating your CUNYFirst account
- Finding out if you are accepted
- Applying for financial aid
- Submitting supporting documents (transcripts, test scores, immunization records, etc.)
- Orientation sessions
- Registering for classes
- Access to support services (Accessibility, Veterans, and Academic Advisement)

Q3 How confident are you that you made the correct degree choice?

- Very Confident (Go to Q5.)
- Confident (Go to Q5.)
- Unconfident (Go to Q4.)
- Very Unconfident (Go to Q4.)

Q4 If you chose unconfident or very unconfident, please explain why.

Q5 How confident are you that you know which steps to take to enroll next semester?

- Very Confident (Go to Q7.)
• Confident (Go to Q7.)
• Unconfident (Go to Q6.)
• Very Unconfident (Go to Q6.)

Q6 If you chose unconfident or very unconfident, please explain why.

Q7 Please indicate the level of helpfulness of your advisor(s)
• Very Helpful (The end of the survey.)
• Helpful (The end of the survey.)
• Unhelpful (Go to Q8.)
• Very Unhelpful (Go to Q8.)

Q8 If you chose unhelpful or very unhelpful, please explain why.

(The end of the survey for all students who attend BMCC.)
Appendix 2:

5 Survey Questions for Students Attending Other Colleges

Q1. Based on our records, you selected BMCC as one of your CUNY choices during the application process, but you never registered at the College. Please indicate why you chose to apply to BMCC. (Check all that apply.)

- Majors and Career Programs Offered
- Location
- Affordability
- The diversity of the student population
- BMCC’s Academic Recommendation
- Family recommendation
- I was certain to be accepted at BMCC
- Other (please explain)

Q2. Did you apply to colleges outside of the CUNY system?
   Yes
   No

Q3. Did you enroll in another college?
   Yes (Go to Q4, for students who attended other colleges.)
   No (Go to Q5, for students who did not attend any college.)

Q4. Why did you choose to attend a college or university other than BMCC?

Q5. Please indicate what portions of the application and registration process could be improved? (Please select all that apply.) (This is Q9 in the master list.)

- Placement testing
- Activating your CUNYFirst account
- Finding out if you are accepted
- Applying for financial aid
- Submitting supporting documents (transcripts, test scores, immunization records, etc.)
- Orientation sessions
• Registering for classes
• Access to support services (Accessibility, Veterans, and Academic Advisement)

(The end of the survey for students attending other colleges.)
Appendix 3:
7 Survey Questions for Students Who Did Not Attend Any College

Q1. Based on our records, you selected BMCC as one of your CUNY choices during the application process, but you never registered at the College. Please indicate why you chose to apply to BMCC. (Check all that apply.)

- Majors and Career Programs Offered
- Location
- Affordability
- The diversity of the student population
- BMCC’s Academic Recommendation
- Family recommendation
- I was certain to be accepted at BMCC
- Other (please explain)

Q2. Did you apply to colleges outside of the CUNY system?

Yes
No

Q3. Did you enroll in another college?

Yes (Go to Q4, for students attending other colleges.)
No (Go to Q5, for students who did not attend any college.)

Q5. If you did not enroll in higher education this fall, please indicate if any of the following were a barrier to attendance: (After this question, go to Question 6, for students who did not attend any college.)

- I couldn’t afford to attend
- I needed to take a job
- I didn’t feel ready for college
- The enrollment process was too difficult
- Childcare issues
- Family issues (other than childcare)
- Other (please explain)

Q6. Please indicate what portions of the application and registration process could be improved? (Please select all that apply.)

- Placement testing
• Activating your CUNYFirst account
• Finding out if you are accepted
• Applying for financial aid
• Submitting supporting documents (transcripts, test scores, immunization records, etc.)
• Orientation sessions
• Registering for classes
• Access to support services (Accessibility, Veterans, and Academic Advisement)

Q7. If you are not currently enrolled in a college or university and would like to reconsider enrolling at BMCC, can we connect you with an academic advisor?

   Yes  (Go to Question 8, for some students who did not attend any college but are interested in coming to BMCC in the future.)

   No  (The end of the survey for some students who did not attend any college.)

Q8. We appreciate your continued interest in BMCC. We would like for you to indicate the best method for contacting you so that one of BMCC's academic advisors can connect with you.

   Name
   Email Address
   Phone Number

(The end of the survey for all students who did not go to any college.)