

## Standard Six: Students

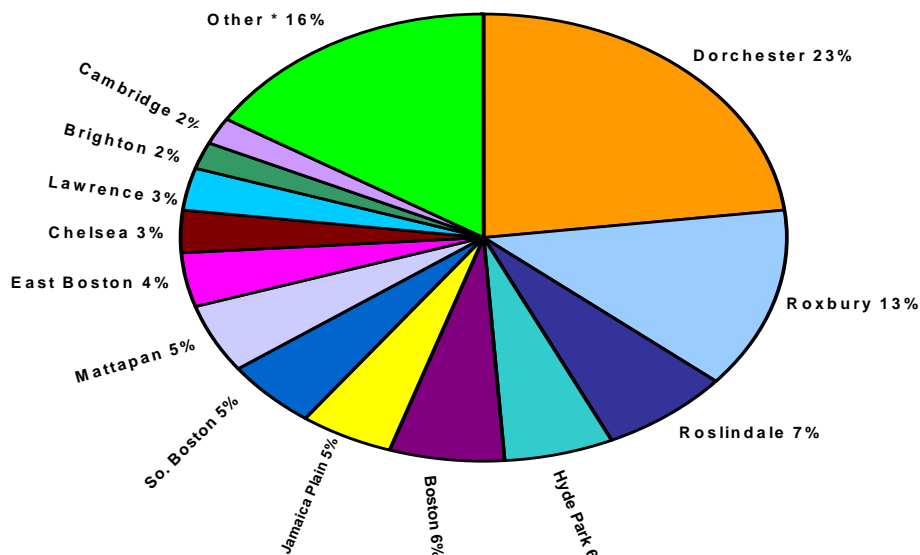
### Description

The Urban College of Boston mission attracts students, but it is the students who are the College's greatest strength. Ninety-three (93) percent of all respondents in the *Community Survey* felt that *Urban College demonstrates great strength in its students* – the highest of all eleven standards. Faculty and staff are here because of the students, and the students, past and present, view each other as remarkable. The institution's respect for its students compels the College to conduct its business with utmost integrity. The Urban College mission clearly states that the *College was established to provide post-secondary education and professional mobility to members of the urban community who have been traditionally underserved by higher education*. Consistent with the mission, the College continues to attract and serve a diverse student population primarily from Boston's neighborhoods.

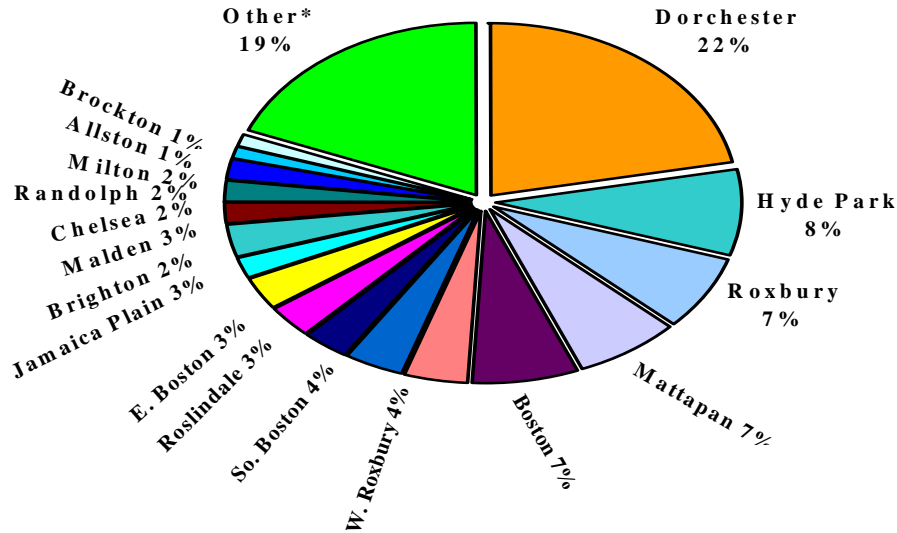
### *Admissions*

Admission to the College is non-discriminatory, a policy that is clearly highlighted in the *College Catalog*, *Student Handbook*, and on the College website. (See Exhibit 6.01: *Student Handbook*.) Students are mostly recruited from area child care centers, human service agencies and other organizations that employ adult learners. The majority of students applying to Urban College respond that a friend or family member who had previously attended UCB referred them to the College. (See Figures 2 and 3.)

**Figure 2: Students by Community: 2004**



**Figure 3: Graduates by Community: 1996-2004**



Admissions decisions are based on the completion of an admissions application and proof of graduation from a high school or GED program. To preserve the integrity of the registration process, students are allowed to register on a first come, first-serve basis. Additionally, students are required to be interviewed by an academic advisor and complete an *Accuplacer* writing assessment prior to registration of their courses. On completion of the writing assessment, students are then placed in the appropriate courses in order to assure them the best chance for success. This writing assessment is consistent with standardized tests utilized by other two-year colleges. Students for whom English is not a first language and who do not meet the requirements for completing a college level course, are enrolled in a basic writing course, or a basic writing for English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) course.

During the registration process, students are also given a *Learning-Style Assessment* to assist the instructor in curriculum development and other instructional strategies that are appropriate to the adult learner. Moreover, through the Learning Resource Center, students receive developmental support and other assistance necessary for successful completion of their studies. The Director of Academic Support may refer students to partnering organizations if it is determined that basic language skills need mastering prior to attending college.

Urban College provides services to identified learning disabled students, such as one-on-one tutoring and untimed testing, to those who need these services. College buildings are physically accessible to wheelchair users. The College has enrolled students who are clients of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and programs of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health. Nancy Daniel, full-time member and Division Chair of Human Services Administration and General Studies, is a registered school psychologist who has taught special needs students for more than 25 years and brings special expertise and experience to working with the learning disabled. There is significant potential for expanding existing services.

An orientation session is held for all new students at the beginning of each semester. At this orientation students are provided with additional information pertaining to advising, financial aid, transfer of courses, support services and other available resources. Orientation sessions are also held in Spanish (orientation sessions for Cantonese students are conducted during registration). (See Exhibit 6.06: *Student Orientation*.) Students also take this opportunity to receive information from faculty about their teaching styles, assignments, projects and other expectations.

The Office of Academic Support Services publishes a *College Resource Directory* and a *List of Support Services* that are available through various community agencies. These services range from childcare services to assistance with housing and health services. These listings are complete with contact information, location and telephone numbers. (See Exhibit 6.02: *College Resource Directory* and Exhibit 6.03: *List of Student Support Services*.)

### ***Retention and Graduation***

Since its inception, the College has been successful in attracting non-traditional students who are highly motivated and determined to succeed. The students who apply to the College's degree programs enter with a specific interest in their chosen field and hold steadfast to their program of choice. This dedication to success is demonstrated by the graduation rate of 50 percent.

The College does not recruit from specific populations, per se, but acknowledges that the majority of applicants are bilingual and have been out of school for at least five years and have little or no prior college experience. Also, many of these applicants may have experienced poor academic preparation at the high school level.

All students who are enrolled in the College's degree and certificate programs are required to be making satisfactory progress towards their academic goals. This information is clearly stated in the *College Catalog* and in the *Student Handbook*, and the Academic Dean closely monitors progress. Consequently, completion of their courses is monitored by an academic advisor who initiates a courtesy call to students who have not attended two consecutive classes. During this initial conversation, students are reminded of the availability of tutorial assistance and other forms of academic support.

At the mid-semester break, instructors issue progress reports to all students whose grade average for the course falls below a "C". This results in a consultation with the instructor and student, and an academic plan is instituted to assist the student in improving his/her course standing. In very few instances, if students continue to demonstrate poor progress, they may be advised to withdraw from the course by the withdrawal deadline to avoid a failing grade. Students are appreciative of the concern shown and guidance from the academic advisor. The students move on and progress toward successful completion of their courses.

Academic faculty advising is an integral component of retention, and students continue to maintain periodic contact with faculty, either by appointment or through telephone contact outside of class. Faculty serve as coaches and through professional development seminars, have

been trained to identify students who appear to be at risk of dropping their courses and to help them seek alternative courses of action.

### *Student Services*

Student Services is written into Urban College's mission, which emphasizes that the College *is committed to the belief that access to a career-related and quality liberal arts education and to an accompanying system of comprehensive student support results in the professional and personal success of those who would otherwise remain unemployed, underemployed or unfulfilled.*

Student Services comprises the Office of Enrollment Services, the Office of Financial Aid, Academic Advising, Learning Resource Center and the Office of Academic Support Services.

- The goal of Enrollment Services is to provide the most effective and efficient record keeping systems to support students throughout their course of study, by providing speedy retrieval of course information, including registration and maintenance of student's course and other profiles, from their entry into the College through graduation. All students' academic records are maintained in the Office of Enrollment Services and all student records are maintained in a Scholastic Online Information System (SONIS). The College pays close attention to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Records maintained include registration forms, grades, transcripts, biographical, demographic, finance and financial data. (See Exhibit 6.04: *Student Record Forms.*)

During the spring semester, the Office of Enrollment Services sponsors a College Fair, bringing admissions directors from four-year institutions who wish to recruit Urban College graduates to the campus. Many of these institutions, such as Lesley University, Wheelock College, Endicott College, UMass/Boston and the University of Phoenix, have articulation agreements with the College and the UCB College Fair offers students an opportunity for one-on-one interviews and information gathering. Students appreciate the opportunity to speak to many college representatives in a local, familiar setting rather than traveling to individual campuses. Likewise, the representatives are able to learn more about Urban College students' academic and personal needs as they relate to their educational goals.

- The Office of Financial Aid identifies students who qualify for support early in the admission process, assists them with the financial aid application process and makes an early determination of their qualification for Pell Grants. The goal of this office is to make financial aid available to students who qualify for assistance. Through information and individual sessions, students are constantly reminded to apply early for financial aid so that they can receive early indication of award amounts.
- Students receive tutorial and other academic assistance on site at the Learning Resource Center. Bilingual tutors who assist students that are experiencing academic difficulty

staff the Center. Although appointments are encouraged, students may also walk in and meet with an available tutor.

- Prior to registering for courses, and continuing every semester, students are required to meet one-on-one with their faculty advisor to discuss and formulate a program completion schedule that will maximize their academic performance at the College. Students also meet with the faculty advisors throughout the semester to discuss their program and to diffuse any difficulties they may be encountering with their program.
- Through the Office of Academic Support Services, new students can arrange to take the writing assessment (*Accuplacer*) and the *Learning-Styles Assessment*. In addition, the office also offers workshops in writing-skill development and basic computer skill development.

A student representative to the Board of Trustees is able to articulate student concerns and to influence change. Student representatives serve on the Board for two years.

The Urban College of Boston Alumni Association, founded in 2004 through the generosity of Moses and Hannah Malkin, is responsible for developing a thriving, loyal network of graduates who keep in touch with and help each other and their Alma Mater, the Urban College of Boston. (See Exhibit 6.05: *Alumni Association By-Laws*.)

## **Appraisal**

Students have continued to be attracted to the Urban College of Boston and enrollment by semester has remained stable within the range of 600-650 students over the past several years. In fall 2005, however, the College experienced significant growth and enrollment reached an all-time high of 752 students.

Students, who need advising in their own languages such as Cantonese and Spanish, now have access to advisors who speak these languages.

Attendance at orientation sessions continues to increase and the information that the students receive is self-empowering and allows them to make better decisions on course choices, add/drop, withdrawal, financial aid application and other policy and services. (See Exhibit 6.06: *Student Orientation*.)

There has been a significant increase in the use of academic support services offered by the Learning Resource Center. During the fall 1998 semester, 61 students used the LRC; three years later in fall 2001, 150 students made almost 700 visits to the LRC. By fall 2004, 226 students, an increase of more than 66 percent, made 1,135 visits to the LRC. Of the fall 2004 student visitors, 49.5 percent maintained or exceeded their cumulative GPA, almost 50 percent were bilingual, and of the bilingual students, 57.2 percent maintained or exceeded their cumulative GPA.

Commitment to student learning remains strong, and the College has recently introduced the *Learning-Styles Assessment* to inform instructional approaches. Students are encouraged to make an appointment with the Director of Academic Support Services so that their individualized learning style may be assessed. Through this assessment, students discover their preferred ways of learning and studying and with the College's support, will increase their academic performance.

### ***Institutional Effectiveness***

Enrollment trends since 2001 show that Urban College has maintained its growth while registrations increasing by 25 percent. The College continues to attract students with characteristics defined by its mission and with a markedly growing proportion of Hispanic/Latino students.

In the *Audit*, senior members of the Urban College community confirmed that the College is serving its target population: 94 percent gave the highest rating to *...consistent with its mission, the institution enrolls a student body that is broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve.*

In the *Community Survey*, 92 percent of respondents felt that: *consistent with its mission, UCB enrolls a student body that is diverse and broadly representative of the urban community of Boston.*

In further support of the College's mission, 90 percent of respondents agreed that: *Once enrolled, UCB provides equal opportunity for all its students to achieve their educational and career goals.* In the delivery of specific services, the responses were somewhat weaker: 79 percent felt that *UCB systematically identifies the characteristics and learning needs of its student population and makes provision for responding to them*, while 77 percent felt that *UCB offers sufficient services that support the College mission of career advancement.* Academic support services ranked high: 86 percent of the total sample reported academic support services as a great strength of Urban College.

It is at the end of each student's time at Urban College that the real impact of the experience becomes evident. Graduation, during which Associate Degrees and Certificates of Achievement are granted, is always a highly emotional, joyous event. Extended families come to witness the celebration of a life-changing milestone, which has often involved many years of struggle – often for the first member of the family to achieve this recognition. There is a palpable recognition that lives have been immeasurably changed.

Urban College, widely recognized as well for its unique mission and dedication, regularly attracts distinguished individuals to speak at its graduation ceremonies, including:

- 1999 – William Julius Wilson, Ph.D. – Director, Jobless & Urban Property Research Program, Harvard University
- 2000 – Senator Jarrett T. Barrios – Massachusetts Senate

- 2001 – Richard E. Wylie, Ph.D. – President, Endicott College, Beverly, MA
- 2002 – Mary Jane England, M.D. – President, Regis College, Weston, MA
- 2003 – Marian Wright Edelman – Founder, Children’s Defense Fund, Washington, D.C.
- 2004 – Alice Huffman – 2004 Democratic National Convention Committee Chair; President, California NAACP
- 2005 – Chris Gabrieli – Chairman, Massachusetts 2020

One significant measure of institutional effectiveness is personal achievement, such as community activism, continuing education and job mobility. Urban College continues to improve its ability to track graduates through surveys and with the formation of the Alumni Association.

### **Projection**

- As the need for tutoring and other academic assistance increases, there will be a corresponding need for additional tutors and resources. Urban College will identify and meet those needs.
- The College will continue to provide new student orientation sessions each semester – in English, Spanish and Cantonese.
- The College will continue to explore the development of a student government body.
- The College will continue to use the Scholastic Online Software System (SONIS) to collect, analyze, and disseminate student data to measurably facilitate planning and evaluation in the area of student affairs.
- The College will develop more quantitative data collection mechanisms to continually assess a critical measure of UCB’s effectiveness: alumni outcomes.