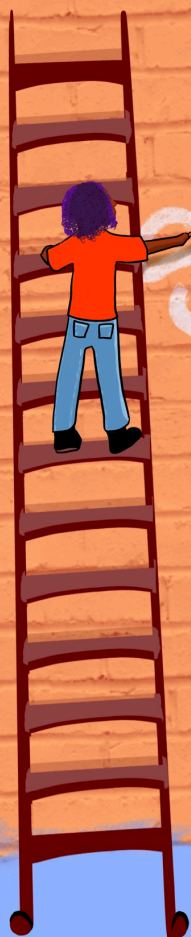


# Student Ready Schools & Campuses Report



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by

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# Introduction

We are the #DegreesNYC Data Fellows, high school and college students from across New York City. #DegreesNYC is a data-informed collective impact movement co-led by young people and education professionals to move towards equity in education in NYC. Our vision is to empower young people to advocate for systems change. Young voices must be centered in the fight for educational justice, because only the youth know their experiences best. Further, empowering youth with a research lens allows them to understand the issues that they experience as systemic and possible to change, instead of internalizing them as personal faults.

One avenue for youth participation at #DegreesNYC is our Data Fellowship, a paid internship where high school and college students engage in the development of research questions, methodology, data collection, and analysis. This report reflects the research done by the Data Fellows and simultaneously serves as a model for how to engage youth researchers, using the #DegreesNYC Data Fellowship and its research into *Student-Ready Schools* as a case study. Student-Ready Schools take the initiative to support all types of students, instead of putting the onus on students to fit the mold of their schools. We believe that Student-Ready Schools are important because students should be the first priority in education.

In this report, we provide an example for effective youth-led research through our Student-Ready Schools and Campuses project. First, we outline the advantages of integrating youth in research. Then, we describe how youth joined the research process through the Data Fellowship. Next, we review our findings. Finally, we reflect on the lessons that #DegreesNYC, youth and professionals alike, learned from working on a project co-led by youth. We also give recommendations to improve the research process and continue research into Student-Ready Schools.

## Youth Participatory Action Research

The #DegreesNYC Student-Ready Schools and Campuses report is grounded in a *Youth-Led Participatory Action Research* (YPAR) model in which “young people research and advocate for change on problems of concern to them” (Ozer and Wright 2012). Unlike traditional research, YPAR acts as a tool to empower the populations that it studies by bringing them into the research design and implementation to help shape the results of the project. YPAR professionals train youth and/or adults to identify issues within their communities, conduct research to analyze these issues, and become leaders to influence change (Ozer et al. 2008). A key component of participatory research is also that the language and distribution of the end report is accessible to the studied group<sup>2</sup>, allowing them to claim their research and use it to benefit their communities.

Youth Participatory Action Research brings a myriad of benefits to youth, such as increasing opportunities for students to affect school policies and making the decision-making process, which is typically carried out by adults, more accessible to students. Further, researchers have found that young people who partake in participatory action research are more likely to be civically engaged throughout their lives (Soleimanpour et al. 2008). Important to our work at #DegreesNYC, participating in research can make young people feel more valuable. Research opportunities also provide youth with access to social connections, guidance, and training.

YPAR enhances the research process. Youth provide vital first-hand accounts of issues present in the area of study and youth can provide perspectives that are vital in cultivating culturally-responsive solutions to issues (Soleimanpour et al. 2008). The questions posed by youth from their lived experiences are also more relevant to framing solutions than those framed by non-students in academia. Last, integrating youth in the research process improves the credibility of research.



## *Assembling the Team of Data Fellows*

The Data Fellowship was advertised to students connected to organizations within the #DegreesNYC Data Co-Op, across our task forces, and through social media. To apply to become a Fellow, New York City high school and college students completed an online questionnaire and participated in an interview. Students were selected based on their experience, skills, and passions related to the project. From a total of 281 applicants in the winter of 2021, five Fellows were selected. Four of those Fellows chose to continue the Fellowship into a second round of more individualized research. Fellows received compensation for their training and research.

## *Outline of The Data Fellowship*

The Data Fellowship consisted of two rounds of projects. The first round focused on training regarding data collection. In the second round, the Data Fellows were able to practice more autonomy over the projects by developing their own research ideas and materials.

At the time of the publication of this report, the concept of student readiness is found widely within the educational professional space. When this project was conceived in 2021, there was also rising agreement that a student-focused shift should occur in education. However, students, practitioners, and professionals had failed to adequately define “student readiness”, and they struggled with identifying proper ways for schools to become more Student-Ready. Our research, as displayed in this report, aims to address those issues and contribute to the wider discussion on student readiness that is present today.



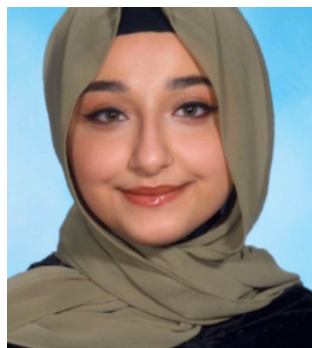
## Meet the Fellows



*Tamima Rohman*

My name is Tamima Rohman and I believe that every student should have the opportunity to succeed in school and in life. I'm passionate about students' perspectives on education and how to best meet their needs.

#DegreesNYC is an amazing opportunity to start that journey.



*Nermen Elkallini*

My name is Nermen Elkallini, and I attend City College as part of the Sophie Davis biomedical program. I am in my first year of college and have experienced what it is like to attend a public high school.

My four years at a medical-based high school helped define for me what the term "Student-Ready Schools" meant. Whether it be the positives of high school or the negatives, both contributed and helped me create the idea of what a Student-Ready School is according to my experiences and what I learned from others.

The reason I joined #DegreesNYC is because of how impactful our work is for future students who will be able to have a better and more effective educational experience by learning from the feedback given by students who have gone through the system. In addition, I am very intrigued by students' experiences from across NYC and being able to listen and get exposed to a variety of those experiences is extremely important to me.

## Meet the Fellows



*Stephanie Raza*

Hi, I am Stephanie Raza from Queens, New York. I see a Student-Ready School as one which provides an inclusive landscape that reinforces student-oriented visions to prepare them for real-world success, [developing] their critical thinking. By taking what we know about education based on existing data on learning models and applying it to achieve what we want, we can make students the top priority by increasing collaboration and shared ownership of decisions among principals, teachers, and educational leaders.

The end goal of a Student-Ready School is to ensure students are on their way to a successful pathway beyond the K-12 system and, ultimately, higher education and careers.

*Bhagyam Tiwari*


My name is Bhagyam and upon joining #DegreesNYC, my first goal was to understand what Student-Ready Schools were. More importantly, I wanted to know [how] the definition varied among different stakeholders in education. I joined #DegreesNYC as I wanted to explore my views on schooling after consciously distancing myself from my student self. We have all been told the importance of schooling and how instrumental it is in defining future generations. However, not all methods of schooling are effective because not all yield the best returns for individual students... Student-Ready Schools, in my opinion, prioritize the health and well-being, knowledge, and school experiences of students. The physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health of a student is fundamental in concocting the best student experience.

In response to the missing definition for “student readiness” at the time that this project began, the Fellows began the Fellowship by creating a student-centered definition rooted in their experiences and outlining the ideal tenets of a Student-Ready School. Based on their definition, we selected key structural components that thematically sorted our focus group questions, analyzing the curriculum, campus culture, technology, mental health support, and financial well-being on campuses. The Fellows interviewed students to outline ways in which their schools supported or hindered student readiness. From these interviews, they outlined common pitfalls to avoid, and strategies to promote to make schools more Student-Ready. Findings from the study are meant to indicate a collection of practices that administrators/educators can choose from based on what will serve students best.

## *Flipping the Script: Our Definition of Student Readiness*

The concept of Student Readiness traditionally refers to the extent to which individual students are prepared for school, placing the majority of the responsibility on students to prepare themselves to fit into their schooling environment. The Data Fellows’ definition of Student Readiness flips this script, and insists that schools and campuses must prepare themselves to receive a diverse group of students and provide them with the necessary resources and experiences that they need to succeed.






"A Student-Ready School is one which provides an inclusive landscape that reinforces student-oriented visions to prepare them for real-world success and develops their critical thinking. By taking what we know about education based on existing data on learning models and applying it to achieve what we want: we can make students the top priority by increasing collaboration and shared ownership of decisions amongst [principals], teachers and educational leaders. The end goal of a Student-Ready School is to ensure students are on their way to a successful pathway beyond the K-12 system and, ultimately, higher education and careers."

- Stephanie Raza, a student at New York University

"We have all been told the importance of schooling and how instrumental it is in defining future generations. However, not all methods of schooling are effective because not all yield the best returns for individual students and society as a whole. Student-Ready Schools, in my opinion, prioritize the health and well-being, knowledge, and school experiences of students. The physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health of a student is fundamental in concocting the best student experience. The health and well-being of a student cannot be maintained by a school alone, but given that students spend a large portion of their lives within educational institutions they should be accountable for helping students lay strong foundations to support them both in and beyond schooling."

- Bhagyam Tiwari, a student at Baruch College



"Student-Ready Schools are institutions that are able to support all students and give them inclusive tools they need to be successful. This requires a school culture in which the administration and staff value students' comfort and take all measures to support them, as well as the commitment to help [them meet their unique] definitions of success."

- Nermen Elkallini, a student at the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education

"To me, a Student-Ready School is one that is designed and implemented with the needs, interests, and potential of its students at its core. It is a school that provides a challenging and engaging curriculum, a supportive and inclusive learning environment, and the resources and support that students need to achieve their goals. A Student-Ready School is also one that is focused on the needs and potential of its students. It is one that provides a supportive, inspiring, and rigorous learning environment. Student-Ready Schools acknowledge that students are distinct and valuable individuals with their own interests, talents, and aspirations, rather than just numbers or test scores."

- Tamima Rohman, a student at Hunter College

According to the Fellows, a Student-Ready School is at its core, an anti-racist one. It is a school whose administration is intentional about calling out racism ingrained in New York City's education system and one that champions equity - ensuring that all students are empowered with the history of student advocacy and systemic inequality without blurring accountability of power. **Overall, the Fellows decided that to be considered Student-Ready, a school must be practice cultural competency and equip students with tools and supports to pursue their own unique paths towards success.**

# Findings

## *Findings from Phase 1*

### **Curriculum: Students reported that their high school and college curriculums do not focus on what they need.**

As current college students, participants believed that their schools forced them to take too many general core courses. This hindered their ability to hone in on their majors as much as they would have hoped. 33% of focus group participants also argued that their schools needed more opportunities to fulfill their majors' requirements through a wider selection of courses. Another 33% of participants hoped that their college would update its curriculum, making changes such as creating a computer science major. Most of the participants believed that their college's curriculum was diverse and representative of a variety of identities. Students expressed that they would appreciate the ability to specialize more in their graduate studies or a career-aligned job. Students described a desire to learn about financial literacy and how to create a self-sustaining future using their degrees.

### **Campus Culture: Students experience loneliness, desire a sense of belonging, and crave opportunities to form community.**

Students expressed a desire for a sense of solidarity on campus. 42% of interviewees specifically mentioned that their college could foster inclusivity by creating a more supportive, respectful, and fair environment, and an additional 17% expressed a desire for an increased sense of community (through clubs, sports teams, or joining the CUNY newsletter). Further, students expressed disappointment that the beginning-of-the-year orientation events faded and left little support throughout the rest of their college journey, instead hoping for more intimate social events for new students. This was especially emphasized by students who began college during the pandemic.



Students also hoped for more events tailored to represent the diversity of races and identities on campus, as some interviewees mentioned experiencing a culture of racism and discrimination. Students praised their campuses for their extensive extracurricular opportunities, diverse student bodies, accessible buildings, and advanced technology.

**Technology: Most students adapt well to use of new technology, but some need extra support.**

Most students interviewed (78%) believed that they felt that the technology on their campus was accessible. Some of them expressed gratitude that they were given hotspots and technology by their universities that made it easier for them to access resources. However, 22% struggled with technology, and expressed issues adapting to using some of the new technology platforms. They recommended that colleges hold information sessions to teach first-year students how to utilize new technology that they encounter when they start college. Further, students hoped for an increase in printers throughout their campuses, and they noted that high-speed internet around campus was vital.

**Mental Health: Students need more mental health support than they receive.**

The majority of students (71%) described a desire for increased mental health support on their campuses. Students expressed difficulty focusing on their studies because of the COVID-19 pandemic. 43% of interviewees expressed that students experienced mental health issues caused by being on campus and being exposed to rising violence, discrimination, and harsh punitive actions by their professors. Many students shared that, while their colleges offered mental health resources, they were limited in availability. Although they benefited from accessing therapy through their colleges, some students were only able to access short-term therapy, even though they required long-term care. Students also hoped for more mental health resources specifically for students from diverse backgrounds, and more accommodations from professors to address fluctuations in productivity because of the pandemic.

Non-traditional students (e.g. students with children) also desired more on-campus childcare services and in-house psychiatrists.


**Financial Well-Being: Most students feel that their financial needs are met, but there are still gaps in access.**

Students felt grateful that financial aid and other forms of monetary support existed, and 78% of participants believed that their college adequately met their financial needs. Nonetheless, 22% of participants still had financial gaps that CUNY was unable to meet, and students argued that their colleges lacked comprehensive, accessible advertisement of the availability of these resources. Some students praised their colleges for providing stipends to pay for technology-related expenses, and hoped that this would spread to other campuses. Last, while many schools supported students with COVID-19 specific aid and relief, students felt that other long-term, pre-existing programs were difficult to learn about and mostly spread through word-of-mouth communication.

## *Findings from Phase 2*

### **Stephanie Raza's Project:**

Stephanie researched the impact of the pandemic on students' experiences of isolation and diminishing focus in school. In a "post pandemic" world, Stephanie found that students experience an overdependence on technology, hyperstimulation, and negative social consequences. Common themes emerged from the focus group discussions, including attention span issues, distractions, and the lack of suitable study environments. For example, one participant shared the difficulty of finding quiet spaces on campus for virtual classes, resorting to makeshift solutions like using headphones and going home for better concentration. Others discussed the detrimental impact of social media on their attention spans and academic performance.




In terms of coping strategies, students explored various techniques such as staying engaged during virtual classes through interactive activities and taking breaks to disconnect from technology. However, challenges such as fear of missing out (FOMO) and overwhelming notifications posed barriers. The focus groups shed light on systemic issues contributing to pandemic fatigue, such as the lack of mental health support and resources for commuters. To address these challenges, and become more Student-Ready, schools could fund unlimited Metrocards for full-time students who commute to campus to encourage them to spend more time on campus and benefit from increased social interactions. Schools might also implement policies mandating breaks during long classes or provide more accessible mental health services on campus.

**Nermen Elkallini's Project:**

Nermen investigated the effect of a student's physical environment on their academic productivity. According to the National Institute of Health, different lighting conditions are shown to notably affect many non-visual functions, such as physiological and psychological mechanisms, and biological-cognitive processes (Golmohammadi et al. 2021). These qualities are important for college students in order to keep up with their studies. However, many classrooms have minimal to no windows, reducing students' exposure to natural light. Student-Ready Schools must understand the impact of natural light on the ability of students to study efficiently.

In her focus group, Nermen found that students suffer from other aspects of their physical environment, too. For example, on some of the CUNY campuses, students lack access to individual study spaces. Some students remarked that certain areas of campus are closed or under maintenance, confining their study options. Other students suggested that they studied better in quiet spaces. Students also expressed that their ability to study effectively depended on meeting their other needs; one student expressed that, as a practicing Muslim, her school's inability to provide her with a space to pray throughout the day limited her ability to work on campus.





To begin to become more Student-Ready, schools could increase the illuminance of their indoor lighting, which would result in a higher level of alertness and attentiveness. Even when participants are sleep deprived, having exposure to a higher illuminance at the eye level results in increased alertness and vitality (Golmohammadi et al. 2021). This, fortunately, leads to improving concentration and attention levels. Taking measures to modify simple aspects of building infrastructure, like light, can play a huge role in students' school life and productivity, and may prove to be an important first step in addressing students' concerns about their campus environments.

**Tamima Rohman's Project:**

Tamima examined the effectiveness of communication on college campuses. In her focus group, many college students argued that their campuses failed to adequately communicate important information to their students, such as financial requirements of attendance. In one example of poor communication, CUNY's administration sent out an email informing students that they would return to 70 percent in-person classes for the Spring 2022 semester. However, students were told that they needed to get the COVID-19 booster shots in order to attend in-person or hybrid classes only three days before the start of the semester (The Editorial Board 2022). Resultantly, many students at Baruch, specifically, came to school expecting to attend an in-person course, but found out that their class had switched to a virtual format because not enough students uploaded proof of obtaining a COVID-19 booster. The pandemic revealed serious issues of communication across campuses, and students' mental health and college experiences suffered because of it. Effective communication between a college's administration and its students is vital to making a school Student-Ready.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This report has two purposes. It serves as an example for effective youth-led research, highlighting its benefits, and ultimately, shows that we need more funding and support for YPAR research projects. Likewise, this report starts a conversation about the lack of student readiness at CUNY institutions, and outlines a series of preliminary suggestions for schools, colleges, and universities to become more Student-Ready. Following the release of the report, we need to further research the factors that cause a school to be more or less Student-Ready, the structural changes that need to occur to adequately support all students, and the policies that we must advocate for to make this possible.

### *The Value of Student-Led Research*

We found that the youth-led aspect of our research brought important benefits. Data Fellows, and other YPAR researchers, enriched our research by providing a certain expertise that education professionals and academic researchers lack. As students themselves, the Fellows had specific knowledge of students' experiences that allowed them to pose questions most relevant to other students. They also had access to a pre-existing network of students to interview. It is also likely that they made the interviewees feel more comfortable and open, because they were communicating among peers.

Youth-led research deserves more support, not only because it supports better research, but because it equips students with valuable skills and confidence to advocate for themselves.

Fellows overwhelmingly enjoyed the Fellowship, with an average rating of 4.8 out of 5 for their overall experience. Upon reflection, they described that they learned new interview skills, and how to find trends in qualitative data, organize focus groups, and think critically. They also felt an amplified sense of ownership over their educational experiences. One Fellow, Tamima, expressed that her independent project “allowed [her] to strengthen [her] passion for advocating for learners and students just like [her]!” Nermen, another Fellow, said that her experience taking on more authority over the second round of independent projects “really opened [her] eyes to how [detail-oriented] one must be to run a focus group,” allowed her to gain experience, and deal with problems on the fly as the research process brought unexpected issues to fruition.

## *A Guide Towards Student-Ready Schools*

A Student-Ready School prioritizes anti-racism, cultural competency, and it empowers students to navigate systemic inequalities on their paths to success. Based on the findings of the first round of focus groups, there are a few key strategies that schools should pursue to become more Student-Ready:

- K-12 school districts need to increase funding for elective courses, as well as support for students who pursue post-graduate options outside of a four-year degree.
- K-12 schools, colleges, and universities should expand mental health resources by increasing the amount of counselors on campuses and extending the duration that students can continuously access therapy to treat long-term issues.
- High schools, colleges, and universities should start holding informational sessions to introduce new students to the technology that they will be expected to use in their time at school.



- High schools, colleges, and universities should focus on developing their financial literacy education.
- Universities and colleges should fund programs that support students through their whole educational journey, especially to support a diversity of races and identities on campus.
- Universities and colleges should advertise financial aid and resources to help meet basic needs (food, housing, transportation, etc.) more widely to improve awareness and accessibility.
- High schools, colleges, and universities should build a collective care team<sup>4</sup> of school nurses, psychologists, social workers, and counselors to comprehensively support students' social-emotional well-being.
- If students cannot afford technology, it should be made available, along with access to Wi-Fi.

## *Limitations and Lessons Learned*

We believe that working with young people enriches our research process. The Fellows brought creative, new perspectives to the development of our research questions, opening up our minds to new ways of thinking. They are also within a network of other young people, and their access to those students helped advertise our focus groups, and encourage students to sign up. The Fellows also potentially made interviewees more comfortable, creating a peer-to-peer space that made them more honest and resulted in a more comprehensive discussion of the student experience. In addition to these benefits, we experienced some struggles. We found it difficult at times to work within students' schedules. Students' capacity to work on our projects fluctuated from semester to semester. Additionally, finding times to meet and schedule focus groups among multiple competing students' schedules proved difficult at times. The Fellows suggested that we create more opportunities to do practice interviews and teach more hard skills, like using qualitative data analysis software that would open them up to opportunities to work with other organizations in the future. They also hoped for more communication about project deadlines.

Through the process of conducting this research project, we found that we would have benefitted had we conducted pilot focus groups to gauge the engagement of interviewees towards our interview questions. We also believe that it may have improved our research if we had limited the size of our focus groups, perhaps even conducting more thorough individual interviews with participants. In a large group, we noticed that students sometimes expressed agreement with one another, but refrained from sharing their unique perspectives and experiences. It would have deepened our research if we had asked students not just to identify issues at their schools, but to also identify solutions. Last, after the focus groups were conducted, we started to analyze the transcripts by grouping common themes. Within these themes, we hoped to analyze the frequency that related terms were mentioned to show how important the themes were to students. We believe that finishing the coding of our focus groups would enhance our results by using quantitative data to support our qualitative findings.

## *Future Research*

In this project, we conducted a CUNY-wide research study to define the concept of student readiness and highlight suggestions for schools to improve the extent to which they support a diverse array of students. In the future, we could build from this research by interviewing students at SUNY institutions. With the understanding that student readiness varies between academic institutions, our research could also be strengthened by an evaluation of the structural inequalities that cause a school to be more or less Student-Ready. In that study, we would highlight the key factors that determine a school's student readiness, and outline avenues forward to equalize the playing field. In the fight for a more just educational system where all students have the necessary environment and resources to succeed, we must prioritize a shift towards Student-Ready Schools to empower students to determine their own educational trajectories.

## Notes

- 1.To learn more about the methodology of our study, see the Appendix.
- 2.This may include writing the report at the average reading level of the population studied, distributing copies for free to those communities, and incorporating those studied into release events.
- 3.Fellows were asked to complete a feedback form in June of 2022 reviewing their experience in the Fellowship.
- 4.Collective care teams, as defined by the New York State School Counselors Association (NYSSCA), are a group of specialized providers including school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and school nurses. They help to support students' physical and social-emotional wellness.
- 5.The final themes were technology, mental health, campus culture, curriculum, and financial well-being.

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# Appendix

## *Methodology*

#DegreesNYC trained the Data Fellows with the support of the Research Alliance for New York City Schools and its partners. The Data Fellowship began with a two-hour long orientation to #DegreesNYC with our Youth Council Co-Coordinators and our Youth Advocacy and Research Coordinator, followed by two 2-hour training sessions on focus groups, and half-hour weekly check-in meetings with our partners at the Research Alliance for New York City Schools throughout the duration of the Fellowship. Rooted in the lessons of *Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* by Robert Weiss, Dr. Brittany Fox-Williams guided the Fellows in developing a shared understanding of equity and how it relates to research, while developing a sense of connection, community, and grounding in the vision and values of #DegreesNYC.

### ***Training the Fellows***

In the first training session, Fellows were introduced to the use, benefits, and protocols behind conducting focus groups, highlighting their distinct ability to gather first-hand qualitative data. Fellows were trained on principles of informed consent strategies to lead focus groups, and ways to formulate quality interview questions. They were trained to approach focus groups with *cultural sensitivity* by demonstrating empathy for students' potential wariness to share intimate and traumatic stories with the group. In the first session, Fellows started proposing ideas for thematic structuring and exact working of the questions. In the second training, the Fellows were taught how to guide a conversation as a researcher. They were also given tips for properly creating an interview guide and taking useful notes during the interview. They learned how to recruit participants by casting a broad net across their social networks.



By the end of the training, Fellows had helped to finalize the focus group interview guide, develop the consent form for participants, recruit focus group participants, and create the recruitment flyer.

### ***Phase 1 of Research: Spring 2022***

Focus groups were open to all current students at CUNY. The Fellows found participants through word-of-mouth advertisement at their colleges, social media, and email outreach to students associated with partner organizations of #DegreesNYC. Sign-ups were collected through an online form. There were 78 responses, from which 38 students were interviewed. All participants signed consent agreements, where they agreed to the use of excerpts from their interviews for #DegreesNYC informational videos and public records, and had the option to remain anonymous. They also agreed to the focus groups being voice-recorded on Zoom. Participants were compensated for their participation.

Fellows were divided into pairs to conduct focus groups, supervised by trained staff members at #DegreesNYC. Focus groups consisted of 3 to 5 participants and lasted about 90 minutes. To begin, Fellows read off an introduction of the study and confirmed that all participants had read and signed the consent forms. Fellows followed a semi-structured interview guide in the focus groups, asking the same set of questions across groups, but allowing for spontaneity with probing follow-up questions. The guide outlines the structure of the interview, but puts the onus on following the steps on the Fellows. Focus groups addressed topics related to technology, mental health, campus culture, curriculum, and financial well-being. At the end of each focus group, participants were asked to complete an optional survey that collected demographic and educational data. Fellows then met with their partners and exchanged notes. Within a few hours of the interview commencing, each Fellow typed out their notes and reflections. Fellows also transcribed the Zoom audio recordings for further analysis.

***Phase 2 of Research: Spring 2023***

After the first round of focus groups and data collection, four of the five initial Fellows decided to extend their Fellowship into a second cycle of research. In this cycle, Fellows chose their own themes to investigate using the same processes, types of materials, and structure of research that they learned in the first cycle of research. Each Fellow submitted a research paper defending their choice of topic. They also created their own interview guides, consent forms, participant recruitment forms, and other forms of materials taught in the first cycle. Unfortunately, the extent to which each Fellow finished their second round of research varied as it correlated with turnover within #DegreesNYC. However, each Fellow created their own interview guide, forms for recruitment, and consent forms based on the equivalents created by the trainers in the first cycle of research. The number of focus groups (0-2) conducted by each fellow varied, too.

We sincerely thank Dr. Brittany Fox Williams for her expertise and guidance coordinating this research project. We thank the entire team at #DegreesNYC, including LaKisha N. Williams, Judith Lorimer, Darleny Suriel, Rachel Bork, as well as Susan Matloff-Nieves, Lisa Merrill, and all other contributors who helped write, review, and edit this report to make it the best that it could be.

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