

CUNY Expands Dual Enrollment to Religious Schools

By Lois Elfman

On Dec. 2, Michelle J. Anderson, President of Brooklyn College, which is part of the City University of New York (CUNY), accompanied CUNY Chancellor Dr. Félix V. Matos Rodriguez on a visit to Yeshivah of Flatbush Joel Braverman High School to speak about the expansion of CUNY's dual enrollment College Now program to include independent religious schools.



Michelle J. Anderson

First established in 1984, CUNY's College Now program facilitates dual enrollment—allowing high school students at public high schools to take college-level courses at no cost. During the 2024–2025 school year, more than 30,000 New York City public school students from almost 600 high schools participated. In 2024, CUNY began including religious schools. Between fall 2024 and fall 2025, the number of students attending independent religious schools enrolled in College Now programs administered by Brooklyn College rose by 144%, from 32 to 78.

“Brooklyn College is the kind of place where what you do matters more than where you came from,” says Anderson, who has been president of Brooklyn College since 2016. “The college is both warm and welcoming and serious about pushing students forward intellectually. We are aware that education changes lives, and we do everything in our power to facilitate positive change.”

Meeting with Students

Twenty-three Yeshivah of Flatbush students are currently enrolled in year-long College Now courses, including physics, English composition, American pluralism and college algebra. These are taught at the high school by Yeshivah of Flatbush teachers who are also Brooklyn College adjunct lecturers. Additionally, 30 students are taking calculus.

“The partnership between Brooklyn College and Yeshivah of Flatbush Joel Braverman High School ... represents a new expansion of CUNY's College Now program into private and parochial schools,” says Anderson. “[At the school visit in December] we underscored that Brooklyn College is a vibrant and welcoming place for Jewish students of all backgrounds.

“We also shared information about our Judaic Studies department, our religious accommodation policy and our large Tanger Hillel House and nearby Chabad (part of the Hasidic movement), both of which provide rich support for our Jewish students,” she adds.

Adding to the connection is that Rabbi Joseph Beyda, head of the high school, earned a master's degree in education at Brooklyn College.

Brooklyn College Impact

Brooklyn College's Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness Lillian O'Reilly worked with CUNY's

College Now staff and leaders at Yeshivah of Flatbush to develop the program to offer appropriate dual enrollment courses. It is a pilot program that can expand to other independent religious high schools.



Instructors follow the curriculum and syllabi developed by Brooklyn College academic departments, which ensures the rigor of the courses and enables students to earn college credits that are fully transferable across CUNY. There are seven community colleges in CUNY and 11 senior colleges.

“With more courses and more spots available, students can try out real college classes and earn credits,” Anderson says. “The program lets them explore different subjects and get a feel for rigorous, college-level work. Overall, it gives more students a chance to get ahead, build confidence and enhance their options in higher education.”

Toward the Future

Brooklyn College launched its College Now program in 2003. Since then, it has enrolled 521 high school students across 56 high schools. In addition to Yeshivah of Flatbush, 20 students at Magen David Yeshivah School are taking one course.

“College Now allows us to engage with public, parochial and private high schools to open pathways for a more diverse and prepared incoming student body,” Anderson says. “As the largest collaborative effort between CUNY and the New York City Department of Education, this initiative strengthens Brooklyn College and CUNY's commitment to diversity and inclusion, welcoming students from the very communities we aim to uplift. Just as important, students who earn college credit through College Now save money on the path to their degree and enter more academically prepared.”

Forbes has ranked Brooklyn College #1 college in the nation for student return on investment. Anderson notes that there are many high school students across the borough of Brooklyn who can benefit from college-level education in high school, and the college's reach is now expanding exponentially. CUNY hopes to use this program as a model for other CUNY campuses across New York City.

“One of our key goals is to raise awareness that College Now at CUNY is now open to private and parochial schools,” says Anderson. “We are eager to broaden the range of courses offered at our current partner schools—especially in core college courses—so students can accelerate their college progress before they graduate high school.

“Our hope is that students will be able to complete several of their general education requirements along with discipline-specific courses while they're still in high school,” she continues. “Above all, we want to provide as many students as possible with an excellent education and support them through their academic journeys.”