

## I Want You to Know

NADE President Robin Ozz

*At the end of April, the New York City Council's Committee on Higher Education invited me to testify regarding the CUNY Start program. I was grateful to be invited, and delighted to testify on behalf of NADE and in support of one of the truly progressive and successful programs in the field. What follows is my testimony:*

Good Morning Chairperson Barron, Members of the Higher Education Committee, and Colleagues,

I am Robin Ozz, President of the National Association for Developmental Education, or NADE, a professional organization that includes almost 2500 faculty and learning support professionals from across the United States. NADE seeks to improve the theory and practice of developmental education at all levels of the educational spectrum, the professional capabilities of developmental educators, and the design of programs to help all students achieve their educational goals.

To that end, it is with great pleasure that I come to testify today on behalf of NADE in wholehearted support of the CUNY Start program. CUNY Start epitomizes the holistic paradigm of true developmental education which addresses the needs of the student whether they are cognitive, affective, financial, social, or academic.

Remedial education has been under great scrutiny, especially since the advent of the completion agenda in 2010, and unfortunately the most popular reforms have not been designed and implemented by developmental educators who understand that silver-bullet academic solutions do not work. That is why CUNY Start brings hope to my field—it addresses the whole student.

In this era of bottom-line, one-size-fits all, fix-them-and get them through education reforms, CUNY Start stands apart. There are several popular one-shot programs that address academic deficits, but the beauty of CUNY Start is that it is a holistic program that builds on strengths; that instead of just filling perceived gaps, it builds successful college students who feel as if they belong in college.

Other strengths that research shows work with helping students succeed:

1. Program students do not feel as if they are being labeled remedial or not smart; instead, they are CUNY Start students. Words matter, especially students are taking a risk even by stepping onto a college campus.
2. The program is low cost. Most students do not continue in remedial courses because of finances.
3. It is rigorous. Students are taught college-level material and treated as capable students. They are not pandered to or treated as stupid.
4. It is holistic. Not only are academics addressed, but college and financial literacy are covered as well.

5. Students build a network of support. We know this is the one quality of any program that will retain students and contribute to their success to the greatest degree (Tinto, 1993). Students feel as if they have a family on campus, that the program built their confidence-- that they were encouraged to never give up.

If I could redirect all the time, talent, and treasure now spent on misdirected remedial reforms into one area, I would redirect them into holistic programs such as CUNY Start and ASAP as well. With these programs, CUNY is an exemplar of developmental education, and I thank you on behalf of my organization and my field.

Tinto, V. (1993). Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition. 2nd. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

I appreciate the work of our CUNY colleagues, and I would love to learn more about what you are doing that works. Please let me know.

Have a great summer,

Robin