



MANHATTAN  
SUNY UCAWD



2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Administered by BOROUGH OF **MANHATTAN** COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## Executive Director's Message



For 53 years, the Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC), established by the State University of New York (SUNY), has been providing needed services in the Harlem Community and beyond. The MEOC bridges the educational and economic opportunity gap and serves approximately 2500 students annually. It is imperative that we stay relevant in this ever-changing world of technology and innovation and are the footprint of what people need to advance themselves. Many organizations have come and gone over the last 50+ years and as the Executive Director, I cannot overlook the fact that MEOC still stands strong amidst the current landscape. This is truly a telling story of our institution's impact on the community and how we consistently look at ways to expand our program portfolio. We have made tremendous strides in the programs and services we deliver and understand and appreciate who we are, for this great community of Harlem. During the last academic year, we started two new programs, that we are already seeing great success in—Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Phlebotomy.

I want to thank my staff and faculty for a job well done as we continue to strive to hit that mark of success. I am proud to be part of an institution that has so many caring people who believe in this mission. This annual report will give you a snapshot of all the wonderful work we have embarked on this year. As you review this report, my hope is that you will envision the work happening in real time and understand the complexity of what we do and how much we pride ourselves on our outcomes.

A handwritten signature of Anthony Watson in blue ink.

**Anthony Watson**  
Executive Director



**L to R (back row):** Robert Park, Director of Student Affairs; Leroy Jemison Lecturer in Mathematics; Courtenay Mitchell, Coordinator of Academic Affairs; Anthony Watson, Executive Director; Carmel Urbaz, Director of Operations; Gisette Forte, Director of Business Affairs; Tanya Brown, Director of Academic Affairs  
**L to R (front row):** Curtis Archer, MEOC Advisory Board Member; Bob Lee, Radio Personality; Lisa McKay, Associate Provost and Director of SUNY UCAWD; Karrin Wilks, Interim President of BMCC; Erwin Wong, Acting Provost & Senior Vice President of BMCC

# About MEOC

## Mission

MEOC delivers student-centered academic and work-force development programs and serves as a gateway to access further education, career achievement, personal growth, and self-sufficiency for adult learners in the NYC area.

## Vision

MEOC is a high performing, collaborative environment that inspires a passion for learning and ensures that all students have the academic and career skills and opportunities to achieve their potential.

## History

The Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC) was established in 1966 by the State University of New York (SUNY) as the Urban Center in Manhattan, as a result of an act of the New York State Legislature.

In 1973, the six statewide Urban Centers merged with the Cooperative College Centers to form Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC). The Urban Center in Manhattan became the Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC). The MEOC moved into our current location, the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building, at 163 West 125th Street shortly after it opened in 1974.

For approximately twenty (20) years the MEOC has provided and continues to provide a Computer Resource Lab & Library that is free & open to the community. The MEOC Advanced Technology Training and Information Networking (ATTAIN) Lab was established in 2001 and serves over 500 participants annually providing the Harlem community access to new technologies, education, and technology training.

For over 50 years the MEOC has worked to bridge the economic opportunity gap among Harlem and greater New York City residents.

## Academic Program Offerings

English for Speakers of Other Languages  
Literacy Development  
Numeracy  
Developmental Study Skills  
Intro to High School Equivalency  
High School Equivalency  
College Preparation

## Career Training Programs

Certified Nursing Assistant  
Electronic Health Records  
Certified Phlebotomy Training  
EKG Training  
Certified Microsoft® Office  
Security Officer Training  
OSHA 30 for Construction  
Hospitality  
Civil Service Exam Preparation

## Eligibility Requirements

1. Demonstrate NYS residency for at least one year prior to enrollment and be 18 years of age or older
2. Provide income documentation
3. Have fewer than 33 college credits or be a non-college graduate (except for ESOL and the ATTAIN Lab)



*Attendees at the 2019 Awards Ceremony*



## Alumni Success Stories



**Michelle Mears-Harry**

MEOC Alumni  
College Prep Program

"I've always wanted to fulfill my longing to move to New York City, so I took a leap of faith and immigrated," shared Michelle Mears-Harry. In 2013, while searching the Internet, Mears-Harry learned of the MEOC and quickly enrolled in its College Prep program. "MEOC helped me with college prep courses in reading, writing, and math as well as the financial aid application process for college," she said. "Their assistance was the bridge that a non-traditional student who has been away from the classroom for more than 20 years needed to get to college." Mears-Harry was accepted to CUNY's Guttman Community College in the fall of 2015 where she earned her Associate's Degree. She is currently enrolled at Mt. Holyoke College on a full scholarship and on track to complete her studies in December of 2019 and graduate in 2020 with her BA.



**Enrique Orochena**

MEOC Alumni  
Certified Nursing Assistant Program

In 2017, Enrique had a life-changing health scare; he underwent a quadruple bypass surgery. He experienced first-hand what it was like to be a patient. "I felt helpless, but I felt safe with the nursing staff," he said. This experience changed his perspective on the profession. Born in Nicaragua and raised in Washington Heights by a loving family, Orochena hadn't considered that men could be nurses. He channeled his compassionate nature and his years of experience in customer service to the health care industry.

After completing the CNA program Orochena said, "I'll be honest, I was emotional. Taking the classes and test-taking made me nervous," he chuckled. He had nothing to worry about because a few months after completing the program, Orochena received notice that he was an official New York State Certified CNA. "What a relief!" Orochena is currently working as a CNA at The Wayne Center in the Bronx.



**Jacqueline Gray**

MEOC Alumni  
High School Equivalency Program

Growing up in Jamaica, Jacqueline always had a dream of receiving a college degree. So, when she came to the US and was told by an admissions officer that her Jamaican High School certificate was not valid, she was dejected. At 47 years of age, she felt it was too late to start over.

Eager to earn a living, Jacqueline became a home health aide but was quickly unsatisfied with the compensation and the work. She reconsidered taking a step back to propel her earning potential forward.

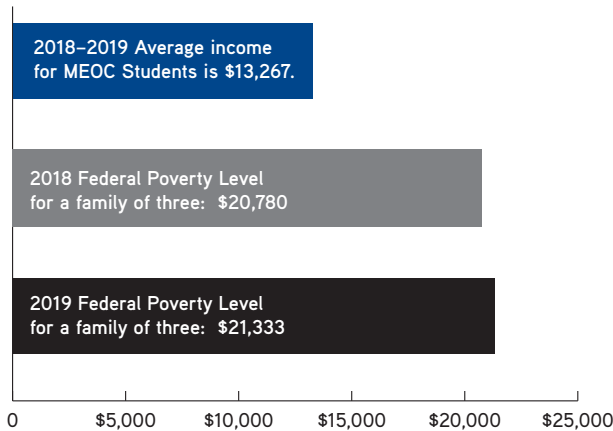
During the spring of 2016, Jacqueline enrolled in MEOC's HSE program. Not only did she become the Valedictorian for the MEOC's Commencement Ceremony but she went on to receive her Bachelor's Degree in Health Services Management in 2018. "The greatest advice I can give students is to believe in yourself and give yourself a chance to do it, you may just be surprised," she imparted.

# Income and Funding

Our students live well below the Federal Poverty Level based on income and supports including but not limited to housing assistance, direct assistance, SNAP benefits, and Safety Net assistance. For these reasons we developed a private giving campaign to supplement their emergency needs including transportation, housing, and clothing. The MEOC receives 94.5% of our financial support from the State University of New York University Center for Academic and Workforce Development. In addition, we receive funding from the USDOE TRIO EOC program for our College Connections services, NYS OTDA SNAP Employment and Training Venture IV to enhance supports available to students receiving SNAP benefits, from NYSED Perkins Office to supplement our Career Training offerings and NYSED Adult Career and Continuing Education Services to serve as a High School Equivalency Testing Center. We appreciate the support of New York State, the federal government and our private donors to support our work and our students.

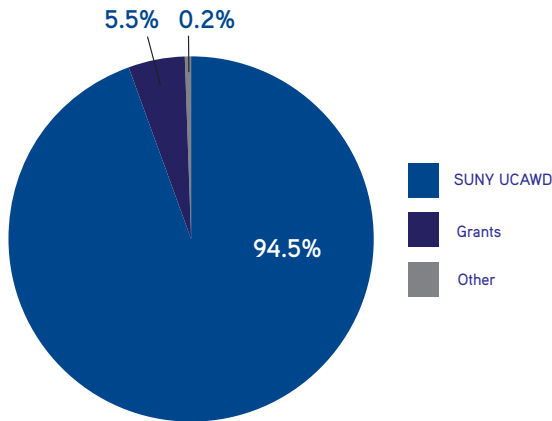
## Economic Level of MEOC

Data from the SUNY UCAWD Reporting System, local level Demographic Report for enrolled students in the 18-19 academic year. Data current as of September 30, 2019.



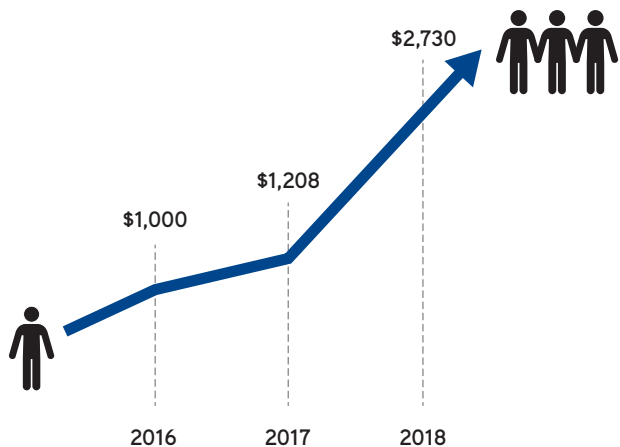
## MEOC Funding Mix

Data from the 18-19 annual budget. Data current as of September 30, 2019.



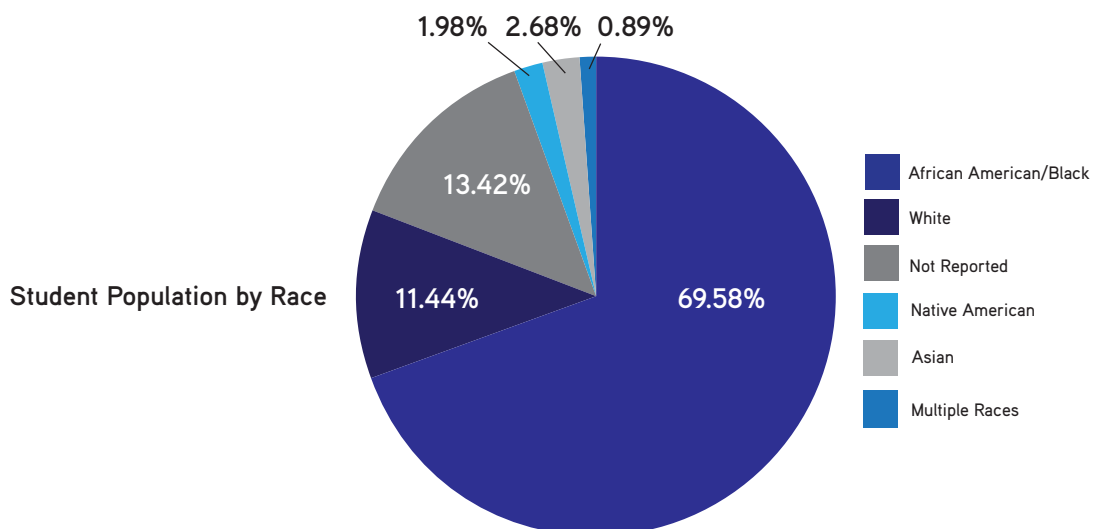
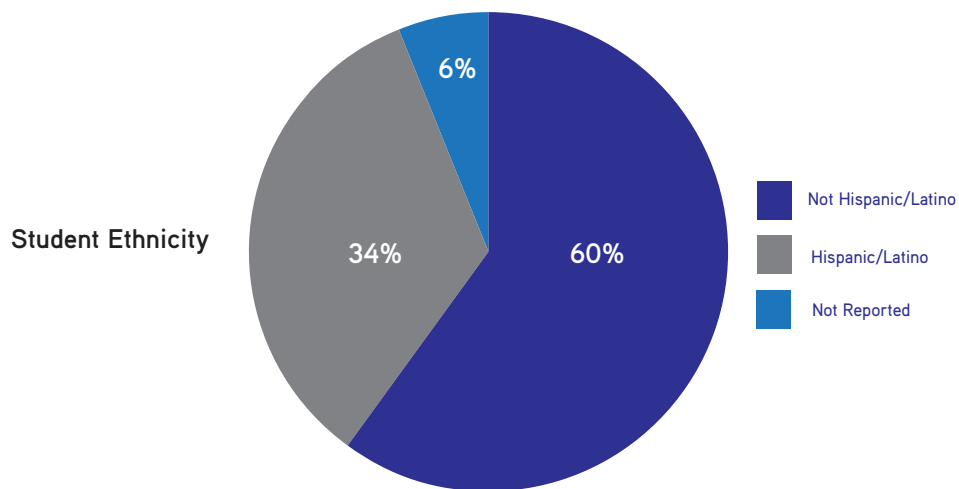
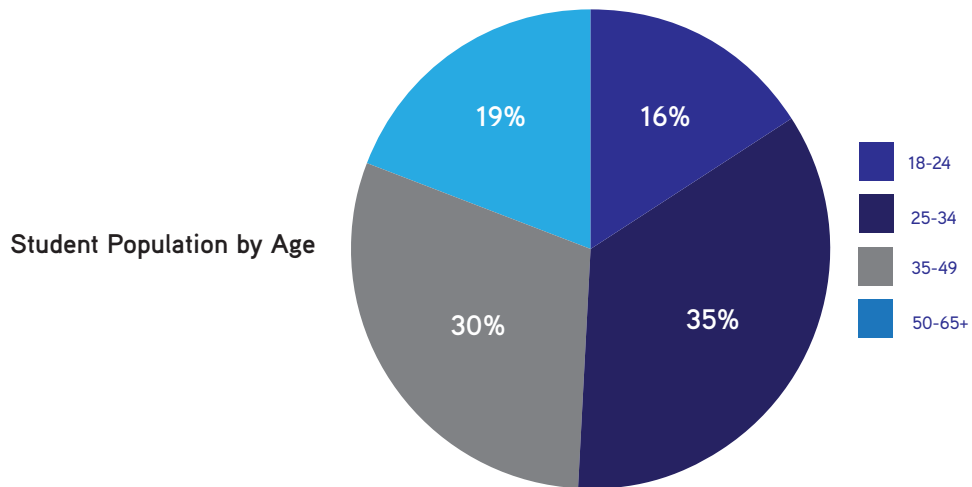
## MEOC Giving Tuesday Campaign

Data from private giving tracking and current as of December 21, 2018.



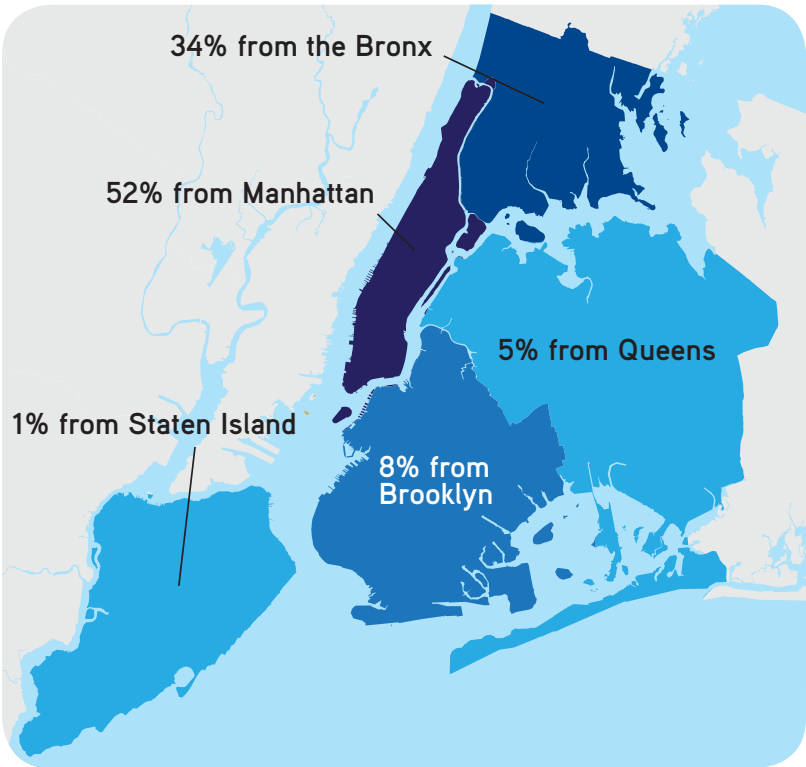
## Student Demographics

We serve a diverse student population based on self-reports of race, ethnicity and age. We serve young adults or “Opportunity Youth” as well as older adults looking to return to school after many years of being out of the classroom.



# Student Population by Borough

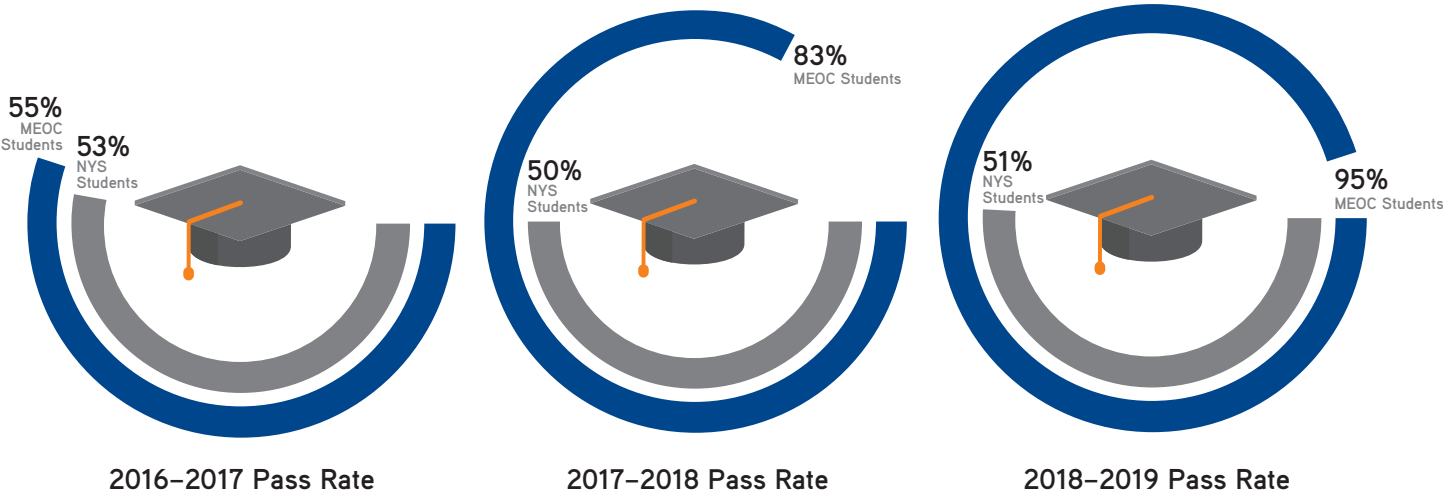
Our students primarily come from Manhattan and the Bronx. An overwhelming majority (72%) of our students who are Manhattan residents reside in “Upper Manhattan” which includes Central Harlem, West Harlem, East Harlem, Washington Heights, and Inwood. In the Bronx our students come from a wider reach including Northern, Central, and South Bronx with transportation being a determining factor.



*Data from the SUNY UCAWD Reporting System, Report 501-003 for enrolled students in the 18-19 academic year. Data current as of September 30, 2019.*

# High School Equivalency

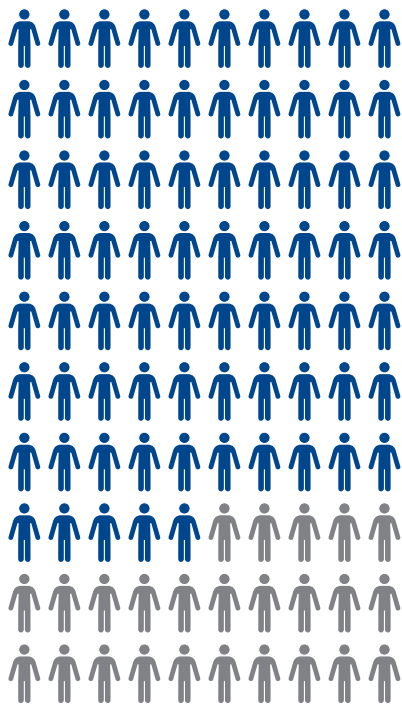
The MEOC is positively impacting the lives of our students, the Harlem Community, and residents of New York City. The MEOC provides adult learners the essential component to upward mobility and college and career opportunities – a High School Equivalency Diploma. The MEOC High School Equivalency attainment rates are nearly double that of New York State.



*Data from the SUNY UCAWD Reporting System, Report 503 for enrolled students in the 2018–2019 academic year. Data current as of September 30, 2019.*

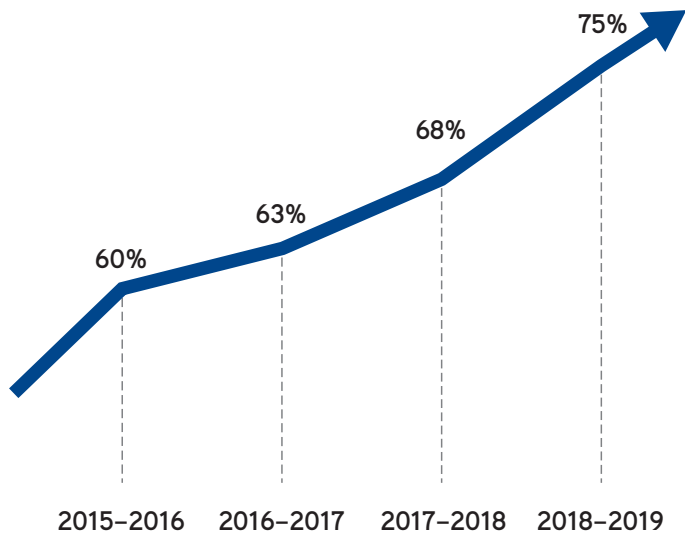
# English Language Proficiency

The MEOC offers a multi-level English for Speakers of Other Languages program where students achieve a 5th grade English reading level by the time of completion. Students can then transition to additional academic preparation prior to college enrollment or a career training program. For the last three years our student performance has continuously improved.



**75%**  
of students in 2018–2019  
showed English Proficiency  
at program completion.

*Data from the SUNY UCAWD Reporting  
System, Report 505 and Dashboard Reports for  
enrolled students in the 18-19 academic year.  
Data current as of September 30, 2019.*



**English Language  
Proficiency Improvement**

*Data from the SUNY UCAWD Reporting  
System, Report 505 and Dashboard Reports for  
enrolled students in the 18-19 academic year.  
Data current as of September 30, 2019.*



## Economic Impact of Programs

Ejhadji Cisse, known as Chef Cisse, and Cheikh Cisse, Chef Cheikh, are Executive Chef Owners of Ponty Bistro and Renaissance restaurants in Harlem. The first cousins moved to the United States in 1995 from Dakar, Senegal, quickly entering the restaurant business. Since then they have worked for internationally renowned chefs at some of New York's most high profile restaurants, serving an array of international cuisines.

Chef Cisse served as sous chef for Mercer Kitchen under Jean-Georges Vongerichten. In 2009, he was a finalist on the Food Network show Chopped. Chef Cheikh was under Daniel Boulud at the Michelin starred Relais & Châteaux member Daniel and at Vongerichten's acclaimed Vong.

Ponty Bistro, named after a popular street, fulfills their dream of owning their own restaurant. Founded in 2008 in Gramercy Park, the hot spot serves unique African and French cuisine with Mediterranean influences. In 2010, the duo opened a second location in Harlem. The cofounders opened their third restaurant, Renaissance, in 2018.

Prior to becoming a well-known chef, 1996-1997 Chef Cisse completed the ESOL program at the MEOC. He stated "I didn't know English when I came to America and I credit the MEOC instructors with giving me the



communication skills necessary to be successful in New York's restaurant industry and employ over twenty people." He continues to refer students to the ESOL program, as he fully understands the benefits of our programming.

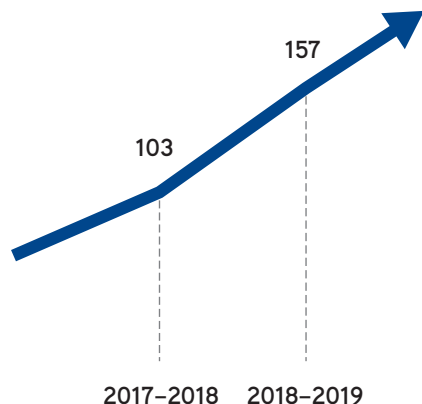
The outcome of our ESOL program has exponential reach. MEOC programs have an economic impact on the individuals who complete our programs, their families, and the surrounding communities. Chef Cisse is a business owner employing talented residents from the Harlem community.

## Advisory Board Member List for 2018–2019

Organization Represented	Advisory Board Member	Title
Community League of the Heights (CLOTH)	Yvonne Stennett, Chair	President
Harlem Community Development Corporation (Harlem CDC)	Curtis Archer	President
Silicon Harlem	Clayton Banks	Co-Founder
Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone	Yahshaanyah Hill	Vice President
JP Morgan Chase	Nichol King	Vice President
West Harlem Group Assistance	Donald Notice	President
Mount Sinai/St. Luke's and Roosevelt Hospital	Marian Y. Scott	Director
1199 SEIU/League Training and Upgrading Fund	Florence Wong	Director

## Employment Placement

Over the course of the last academic year the MEOC Career and Employment Advising Team have improved the number of student employment applications and in turn employment placements. Almost half of the students who complete a Career Training program and apply for employment are able to obtain it with the support of our staff.

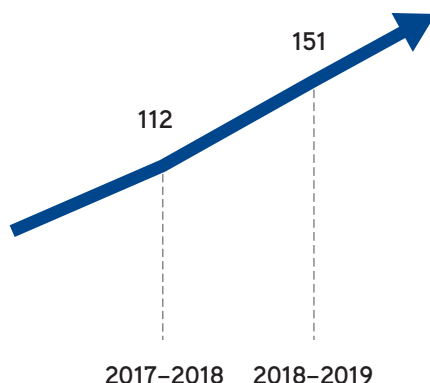


Our Employment Placement Rate from all programs increased by

# 52%

from 2017-18 to 2018-2019

*Data from the SUNY UCAWD Reporting System, Report 507-003 and 508 for enrolled students in the 18-19 academic year. Data current as of September 30, 2019.*



Our Employment Placement Rate from Career Training Programs increased by

# 35%

from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019

*Data from the SUNY UCAWD Reporting System, Report 507-003 and 508 for enrolled students in the 18-19 academic year. Data current as of September 30, 2019.*

## Student Engagement and Community Events

The MEOC hosts regular events to engage our students and the broader community.

Our regularly monthly cultural events are generally open to our students and the community and have brought in local business leaders and authors. These events serve to build community and motivate our students to achieve their goals at the MEOC and beyond. Some distinguished authors we've heard from are Dr. Ginny Baro, author of *Fearless Women at Work*, Tiffany Dufu author of *Drop the Ball*, *Achieving More by Doing Less*, Cheryl Wills author of *Die Free: A Heroic Family Tale*, and Flores Forbes author of *Invisible Men: A Contemporary Slave Narrative in an Era of Mass Incarceration*.

We host specific student only events such as our annual Writing Contest which includes essay and poetry submissions as well as our annual Math Challenge which consists of three rounds of problem sets based on individual academic program. This allows all students to participate regardless of their current understanding of math. One of our goals is to reduce the level of fear around math among our adult learners. The final round is a live round with winners announced immediately after the solutions are reviewed.

Our largest events are our annual Job Fair where the goal is to provide attendees with current open positions and in some cases the opportunity to interview on the spot and our College and Career Fair where the goal is exposure to diverse colleges and careers.

These initiatives taken together have improved student engagement and community building. From 2017–2018 to 2018–2019 our student retention improved by 11 percent.



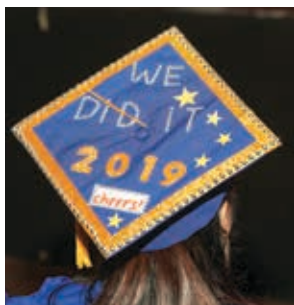
Attendees at the annual MEOC Job Fair



MEOC Directors



Graduates of MEOC



Student cap at the 18-19 graduation



Writing Challenge Winners



Students and Staff attending the annual NYS Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislative Caucus.



All Staff



### Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center

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