Washington Student Achievement Council
Pave the Way Webinar
April 2021
Multi-Faceted Support Programs:

Using Evidence to Address Multiple Barriers to Student Success and Advance Equity
Agenda:

1) Intros & Overview of MDRC
2) Challenges and obstacles in higher education
3) Summary of current research evidence
4) Questions & panel discussion
About MDRC

• Nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with experience conducting demonstrations in postsecondary education

Specializes in:

• Random assignment evaluations
• Qualitative studies
• Program enhancement & technical assistance
Why are college completion rates low?

- Academic Challenges
- Financial Barriers
- Work-Life-School Balance
- Lack of College Know-How
- Institutional Barriers
Equity and Achievement Gaps

• Three-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time freshmen in community colleges is only 35 percent.¹
  • Community colleges serve a disproportionate share of students of color, low-income, part-time, and first-generation students.²

• Black and Hispanic students earn college-level credentials at a rate ~20% lower than their peers.³

• Adult learners complete college at a rate ~15% lower than “traditional-age” students.⁴

• Rural students enroll in and complete college at lower rates than their urban and suburban peers.⁵
Goals for Postsecondary Education

*Increase* graduation rates for low-income students

*Improve* strategies throughout the Postsecondary Pipeline

*Reduce* college equity gaps
Randomized Controlled Trial or "RCT"

- Random assignment is a lottery-like process to place students into a “program group” and a “standard services group” (aka control group).

- Allows researchers to measure the impacts (effects) on outcomes for each group.

- A fair way to determine who receives program services when resources are limited.
Random Assignment

Eligible for intervention services
May participate in all other college services

Program Group

OR

Standard Services Group
May participate in all other college services
Postsecondary Interventions + Policies

What does the evidence say?
Big Picture: What Works

• **Short-term** interventions designed to address just one or a few barriers can lead to positive, but modest, effects.

• **Comprehensive programs** that integrate different strategies and are **sustained over time** are more likely to produce long-term impacts on student success.

• **Examples:**
  - CUNY ASAP
  - ASAP in Ohio
  - Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement
  - Bottom Line
  - One Million Degrees
Long-term, Multifaceted Interventions

- Students face many barriers to success.
- Programs that simultaneously address multiple barriers can more effectively improve student success rates.
- Examples of intervention components:
  - Financial aid
  - Expenses:
    - Books, transportation
  - Academic preparation/transitions
  - Coaching/Advising
  - Summer engagement
  - Job programs on- or off-campus
  - Outreach + communication
Goals for Postsecondary Education

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*Improve* strategies throughout the Postsecondary Pipeline

*Reduce* college equity gaps
Transition to College

What does the evidence say?
Texas Developmental Summer Bridge Study

- 8 summer bridge programs in Texas.
- Positive outcomes: college-level course completion: math and writing.
- No long-term impacts.

Learning Communities Demonstration

- 6 learning communities across the country.
- Small positive effects on subject and overall academic progress.
- Small long-term impacts depending on design.
Developmental Education

What does the evidence say?
Multiple Measures Assessment Project

• **Problem**: Mis-placement into developmental courses based on placement tests is common.

• 7 community colleges in New York.
  • Status quo placement process vs. multiple measures.

• More students placed into, enrolled in, and completed college-level math and English.

• Especially helps in English and for students “bumped up.”

• Effects fade over time as control group students catch up.
Dana Center Math Pathways

• 4 Texas colleges.
  o Pathways align with career interest
  o Accelerated dev ed math
• Positive impacts: developmental math completion, passing college-level math, & math credits earned.

CUNY Start

• 4 New York colleges.
• Matriculation delayed one semester: intensive math, reading, writing instruction.
• Positive impacts: college readiness, credit accumulation, graduation rates.
Summer Enrollment

What does the evidence say?
The Encouraging Additional Summer Enrollment (EASE)

- 10 community colleges in Ohio.
- Behavioral science + financial incentives to boost summer enrollment.

![Graph showing enrollment rates and credits earned]
Advising and Financial Aid

What does the evidence say?
Advising and Financial Aid Interventions

• The best advising and coaching are case management models using proactive outreach – different from traditional ad hoc, drop-in models
• Tying additional financial aid to milestones can increase take-up
  • Performance-based Scholarships tied additional aid to FT enrollment, attending advising, completing developmental math, and other milestones
• Effects are clear during program semesters and tend to fade after the intervention ends.
Multifaceted Interventions

Putting the pieces together
CUNY ASAP Program Model

Financial Resources
- Tuition waivers
- Textbook stipend
- Monthly MetroCard

Structured Pathways
- Full-time course schedules
- First-year blocked courses
- Winter and summer courses

Comprehensive Supports
- High-touch, case management advising
- Career services
- Tutoring
- Early engagement

EVALUATION AND DATA USE FOR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
CUNY ASAP Increases Graduation Rates

Completion rate (%)

Program Group  Control Group

Semester 6

40  22

Completion rate (%)
CUNY ASAP Increases Graduation Rates for Students of Color and Nontraditional Students
Could ASAP work in another state? With a different student population?

ASAP Demonstration in Ohio
Ohio Program Model

Programs based closely on CUNY ASAP

Financial Supports
• Tuition Waiver
• Gas/Grocery Card
• Textbook Vouchers

Student Services
• Triage Advising
• Tutoring
• Career Services

Student Responsibility and Messaging
• Enroll Full-time
• Take Dev. Ed. Early
• Graduate in 3 Years

Course Enrollment
• ASAP Seminar
• Course Schedules
• Early Registration
Ohio Programs Almost Double Graduation Rates

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent
Ohio Programs Almost Double Graduation Rates for Students of Color and Nontraditional Students

[Bar chart showing comparison of three-year completion rates for Students of Color and Nontraditional Students between Program group and Control group.]

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Ohio Programs Boost Use of Student Support Services Among Students of Color

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Ohio Programs Cost More But Lower the Cost per Degree

- About $1,800 = direct cost per program group student per year

Cost per student was higher, but the Ohio Programs lowered cost per degree by 22%.
ASAP Programs: Cost

• Annual direct cost per student
  • CUNY ASAP: $3,400
  • ASAP Ohio Programs: $1,800

• It’s a cost-effective investment! 16–18 percentage point impact on graduation.
• It’s still a big investment in an era of decreasing state investment in two-year colleges.
SUCCESS

Multi-faceted, long term program that builds on MDRC’s 15 years of postsecondary research

Combines the most effective elements and uses existing resources to create lower-cost programs that are more likely to be sustained and scaled
SUCCESS Model

- Coaches who reach out proactively and meet frequently with students
- Financial incentives to encourage students to satisfy program requirements and to provide additional funding
- Programs that serve students for at least three years and focus on strategies to increase academic momentum. Students earn 24 credits per year through full-time enrollment in main semesters and summer term enrollment.
- Management information systems (MIS) that provides data to support program management and improvement
- Commitment to program affordability and sustainability by leveraging and consolidating existing resources
The State Role in SUCCESS

• **Evaluation support:** Encourage colleges in the state to commit to learning through evaluation and ongoing continuous improvement efforts. Provide MDRC with state data as needed.

• **Network support:** Coordinate and support a cross-site learning network of SUCCESS colleges and share learnings with other colleges in the state.

• **Financial support:** Identify existing funding streams or new resources that could be used to support SUCCESS.

• **Scaling support:** Develop a plan for sustaining SUCCESS and expanding it to additional colleges in the state. Engage key stakeholders to get buy-in and support for SUCCESS.
Discussion and Q&A
References:


