

# CollegeBound

## A Summary of:

### A NEW FIELD EMERGES: COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAMS,

June 1995 Center for Human Resources, Heller Graduate School, Brandeis University (Waltham, MA) by Lawrence Neil Bailis, Andrew Hahn, Paul Aaron, Jennifer Nahas and Tom Leavitt

## Overview

College access programs are based on the assumption that the best way to help disadvantaged youth improve their lives is to ensure that they graduate from high school and go on to pursue a four-year degree. “Last-dollar” scholar programs have financial assistance for college as a defining characteristic (scholarships help students pay for any remaining costs of college after financial aid has been received) and also provide a four-year support structure to get students to seriously consider college, apply to college, apply for financial aid and actually attend college. Brandeis researchers studied seven college access programs, including Baltimore’s CollegeBound program (hereafter BCB) which is the primary subject of this summary.

## POPULATION

The five programs for which the evaluators had population numbers enrolled more than 76,600 high school students (35 percent of the high school students in the districts served by these programs). The programs served 34,378 seniors, 80 percent of the seniors in their districts. The majority of scholarship recipients were female. Race and ethnicity patterns varied: 87 percent of students in BCB and 54 percent in the Columbus program were African American. In Cleveland, African Americans and whites were about evenly split. In Boston, Asians made up the largest group of recipients, followed closely by African Americans. Hispanics also received 15 percent of the scholarship awards in Boston and 13 percent in Broward County, FL.

## Evidence of Effectiveness

Brandeis researchers evaluated BCB through a qualitative effort involving interviews and focus groups and a quantitative effort to assemble and analyze data on the college attendance status of more than 400 former Baltimore high school seniors one year after their scheduled graduation from high school and additional data on their high school performances (including their grades and attendance rates). Analysis of data from BCB showed:

- ◆ relative to comparable Baltimore students, BCB’s last-dollar scholars who attended the University of Maryland between 1989 and 1993 had a lower dropout rate (17 percent vs. 47 percent)

*“The Baltimore CollegeBound evaluation described in this report provides the best empirical evidence thus far that a college access program can have a demonstrable impact on college attendance for some types of students at some types of high schools.”*

*Brandeis University*

- ◆ none of BCB’s last-dollar scholars who entered Morgan State since 1990 had dropped out of college in the first three years, while between 16 and 31 of every 100 Baltimore City high school graduates attending college had dropped out

- ◆ improved odds of attending a four-year college, with specific odds depending on type of high school, student achievement and number of services received through BCB
- ◆ in Boston, a high of 97 percent renewed in 1980 and a low of 85 percent renewed in 1990
- ◆ in Columbus, a high of 56 percent renewed in 1988 and a low of 17 percent renewed in 1989

To measure retention, evaluators looked at second-year scholarship renewal in Baltimore, Boston and Columbus. Of students who had received freshman year scholarships:

- ◆ in BCB, 45 percent of students were missing documentation for renewal

Scholarships could be renewed if students and their counselors knew to submit and submitted the necessary documentation. In many cases scholarships were lost in the second year due to a lack of paperwork, thus affecting retention.

CollegeBound cost just over \$600 per participant.

## Key Components

BCB supports include:

- ◆ in class presentations for 9th and 10th graders, to motivate students to consider college as an option
- ◆ for 11th graders, counseling on an individual basis that helps with: college applications,

applying for financial aid, the SAT or other achievement tests and applying to several different colleges

Money to pay for college is provided only to those students whose financial aid package does not cover their college tuition: it pays the difference between the financial aid and the full college tuition.

## Contributing Factors

### *The Money*

The Brandeis University evaluators found for the BCB that it is the prospect of the scholarship as much as the scholarship itself that affects student enrollment and retention in post-secondary education. Motivating youth to seriously consider college, learn about different schools, apply for admission and financial aid is greatly facilitated by the promise of funds. Students get discouraged quickly if they believe that they will never get enough financial aid to make all their efforts worthwhile. The actual amount of college tuition paid for by college access programs is limited to tuition not covered through other forms of financial aid. (See *I Have a Dream*, pp. 186-188).

### *Intensive, Individualized Counseling*

To be successful, last-dollar college access programs have to provide more than just the money. The Brandeis study tracked students into college. In

BCB, “[S]tudents who received counseling at neighborhood schools were considerably more likely to attend college and continue through to the end of their freshman year than those neighborhood school students who did not engage in these CollegeBound activities.”

### *Poor Implementation Hurts*

Many scholars in the college access programs evaluated did not submit documents for a second-year scholarship renewal because they did not know they could and/or because the college financial aid staff were not aware of the requirements. This suggests that college access staff in high schools must make a special effort to maintain communication with both scholarship students and college financial aid staff.

***Flexibility to Adapt to Community Needs***

Brandeis: "...ultimately, college access programs need to be tailored to the unique circumstances in each locality, including the current strengths and weaknesses of the local school system, the

availability of resources to support college access programming and the unique opportunities that may be present as a result of talented individuals with the commitment necessary to fulfill the vision."

**STUDY METHODOLOGY**

Brandeis researchers conducted a literature review on college access programs in six sites, assembled summary statistics on basic program measures in the six sites plus BCB. Brandeis researchers also evaluated BCB through a qualitative effort involving interviews and focus groups and a quantitative effort to assemble and analyze data on the college attendance status of more than 400 former Baltimore high school seniors one year after their scheduled graduation from high school and additional data on their high school performances (including their grades and attendance rates).

**EVALUATION FUNDING**

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**GEOGRAPHIC AREAS**

Boston, MA; Broward County and Dade County, FL; Cleveland and Columbus, OH; Philadelphia, PA and Baltimore, MD.

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