

Upward Bound

A Summary of:

THE SHORT TERM IMPACT OF UPWARD BOUND: an Interim Report, February 1997, by David Myers and Allen Schrim

A 1990'S VIEW OF UPWARD BOUND: Programs Offered, Students Served, and Operational Issues, February 1997, by Mary T. Moore

Overview

Upward Bound (hereafter UB) is a federal initiative designed to increase opportunities for disadvantaged youth to attend college. UB provides academic courses, tutoring and counseling during the school year, as well as an intensive, college-oriented summer program. As one of the federal TRIO programs, UB is funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to help students overcome class, social, academic and cultural barriers to higher education. [Four other TRIO programs work with low-income and first-generation students at different stages of the educational pipeline. Talent Search and Educational Opportunity Centers provide less intensive college information services to young people and adults respectively. [Student Support](#)

POPULATION

More than 600 UB projects serve 42,000 disadvantaged students as measured by income (family incomes at under 150 percent of the poverty line) or by parents' educational status (neither parent has graduated from college). Nearly three-fifths of the participants are African American, one-fifth are white, and one-eighth are Latino; 59 percent are female.

[Services](#) supports retention and graduation of low-income, first-generation and disabled students in college. The Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program prepares low-income and first-generation college students for doctoral programs.]

Evidence of Effectiveness

The U.S. Department of Education commissioned a six-year experimental study of program impacts, of which this report is the initial phase. This report focuses on the first few years of high school and assesses short-term impacts. It found the following statistically significant impacts:

- ◆ During their first year of participation, UB students earned:
 - about one more high school credit (in Carnegie units) than control group members
 - more credits than control group members in science (0.18), mathematics (0.16), English (0.26), foreign languages (0.13) and social studies (0.22)
 - more credits than control group members in vocational education and remedial mathematics courses
- ◆ UB students who had *lower* initial educational expectations (did not expect to complete a four-year degree) earned substantially more credits than similar control group members,

surpassing the number of credits more than similar control group members that UB students with *higher* initial educational expectations (expected to complete at least a four-year degree) earned:

- 0.6 vs. 0.1 more credits in mathematics
 - 0.8 vs. 0.1 more credits in English and Social Studies
 - 3.1 vs. 0.5 more credits across all academic subjects.
- ◆ UB students who were Hispanic gained more than 2 credits, compared to gains of less than 0.5 credits for African American and white students.

UB course content appears to be academically serious:

- ◆ the majority of the projects prescribe either a foundation set of courses (reading, writing, Algebra I and II), or mathematics/science courses (precalculus, calculus and science in addition to the foundation courses)

- ◆ 50 percent of the projects offer more than 17 academic courses in the summer and 10 during the regular school year
- ◆ more than two-thirds of the projects focus on college-prep or enrichment programs

Nevertheless, a large percentage of UB students leave in the first year. About 32 percent of those who entered the program before the summer of 1993 had left by the end of the 1993-1994 academic year. Projecting from the experience of all students in the study, Mathematica concluded that 37 percent of UB participants will leave within the first year.

Although both the program and control groups experienced a decline in their educational expectations over the course of the study, the decline was much steeper for the control group. Similarly, the educational expectations that control group parents had for their children declined at a sharper rate than did the expectations of UB parents.

The average federal cost per student in 1996 was \$3,800 (in 1996 dollars).

Key Components

Most students enter UB in their freshman or sophomore years. They participate in weekly activities during the school year and an intensive summer program designed to simulate college. The projects are usually hosted by two- or four-year colleges, although some are hosted by community-based organizations and high schools. UB is focused on academic preparation through enhancing the high school curriculum (often through offering academic courses in addition to those taken at high school) and emulating a college-level experience. Most projects provide a large range of support services, including tutoring, counseling, planning for financial aid, career planning, cultural

“Despite increases in overall levels of college attendance, a considerable gap remains between the postsecondary participation and completion rates of disadvantaged students and those of their more advantaged peers. Upward Bound is one of the main components of the federal government’s enduring commitment to reduce this gap.”

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awareness programs, and stipends. UB projects tend to focus their efforts on the student--not the school system or the family.

Contributing Factors

Employment Considerations

In some cases, students declined to enter a UB program or left during the first year for reasons related to employment. If there were more opportunities to gain work experience or workplace skills through the program, the retention rate might be higher. An earlier study—“The National Evaluation of UB: Grantee Survey Report,” September 1995, Nancy Fasciano and Jon Jacobson (Mathematica), submitted to US Department of Education—showed that the retention rate was higher in programs that offered year-round work experience than in those with less than a full-yearwork component.

Students with Lower Expectations Left UB in Greater Numbers

Students who were not planning to complete a college degree were more likely to leave the program in the first year.

Race/Ethnicity Is a Factor in Students' Leaving

Asian students were only one-third as likely as African American students to leave UB, and Native American students only half as likely to leave as

“...our initial look does suggest that larger impacts may be possible if Upward Bound projects were better able to hold students in the program, particularly students with low initial expectations...One approach for retaining these students is to place more direct emphasis on raising expectations of lower-aspiration students so that they see the possibilities available to them if they remain in school for a longer period. Another mechanism for retaining participants may be the provision of employment opportunities during the summer and school year.”

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African American students. These two groups were also more likely to participate initially than African American students.

Early Intervention Improves Participation

UB recruited students in the 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th grades. Researchers found that students targeted by recruitment efforts in the upper grades were less likely to participate in UB when given the opportunity to do so.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

From a representative sample of 67 UB projects, 2,800 eligible applicants were randomly assigned to either UB or a control group. Researchers compared the two groups by analyzing data from a longitudinal student survey, high school transcripts, service records, surveys of the project director and the high schools from which students were recruited, site visits and program records.

EVALUATION FUNDING

Both studies by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (Washington, DC office). Both evaluations funded by U.S. Department of Education.

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

UB programs are in communities nationwide.

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