

College Access Maximization: Essential Needs, Intervention Programs, and School Reform

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Today's Themes

- The essential conditions of college enrollment, especially for low-income and first-generation students,
- The role and effectiveness of intervention programs, and
- The relationships among higher education, K-12 institutions, and students and their families.

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Disparities in College Access

- Across all achievement levels, lowest SES students less likely to apply to or attend college than are the highest SES students, while students of color and poor students are less likely to start or finish college
- Despite extensive policy efforts and financial aid, the college participation gap between low-income and high-income students today is roughly the same as in the 1960s.

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The Keys to College Access

- Educational expectations
- Academic achievement
- Supportive family members
- A school with:
 - A college preparatory curriculum,
 - A college culture, and
 - Supportive, knowledgeable staff, including counselors, teachers and administrators

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Equity

- These keys are not uniformly found in America's public schools.
- Most low-income, educationally disadvantaged students are educated in schools that are under-resourced, staffed with lesser quality teachers, and have far fewer counselors that are needed.

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Intervention Programs

Developed as an alternative for assisting students whose schools had failed them in their college access quest.

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A Brief History of Pre-College Intervention Programs

- 1964, Upward Bound (UB)
- 1965, Higher Education Act, TRIO Programs-UB, Talent Search, and Student Support Services
- 1981, *I Had A Dream*
- 1998 GEAR-UP-Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Preparation

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Federal Investments

- TRIO programs \$800 million (FY2002)
 - Serves individuals
- GEAR-UP \$200 Million (FY2002)
 - Serves cohorts of students
 - Mandates a partnership web among students, families, K-12 schools, colleges, and community organizations.

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Other Intervention Programs

- **States:** College Making It Happen (CA), Children's Crusade for Higher Education (RI), Get Ready (MN)
- **Private Programs:** I Have a Dream, AVID, MESA
- **Colleges & Universities:** One in three PSEs have their own program, 50% provide in-kind services to such programs, and 25% offer direct financial support.

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National Survey of Outreach Programs

- 1100 programs; 57% federally-sponsored, 9% university sponsored, 15% state funded, and 22% privately funded.
- Program objectives: college awareness, social development, academic support and parental involvement.
- Highest ranked goals: college awareness, social development, academic support, parental involvement.

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Intervention or Triage?

- Seemingly a pre-college program intervenes positively between a student and her/his college dreams or aspirations.
- Programs intervening between students and failing school systems.
- Triage sorts and allocates scarce treatment in order to maximize survivors.
- Current programs reach 10% of the needy populations.

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Effectiveness?

Yes, No, Maybe So?

Evidence Problems:

- Lack of funding for design & data collection
- Limits of research methodologies
- Most programs lack baseline data or capacity
- Lack of controls
- Volatility in program funding
- No standard or proven evaluation templates

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Gándara & Bial (1999)

Early Intervention Programs Are:

- “Capable of at least doubling the college-going rate of participants” and
- Can “open both eyes and doors to postsecondary possibilities.”

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Six Elements of Effective Programs

- A key adult who guides the student overtime
- High quality instruction, either in or out of school
- A long-term investment in students
- Attention to the cultural background of students
- A supportive peer group, and
- Financial assistance and incentives.

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Upward Bound Evaluation (1999)

- Graduates had higher educational outcomes (attainment, credits, etc.) than the control group
- Benefits of participating in Upward Bound were greatest for low-income students who initially had low expectations and achievement.

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Cabrera and La Nasa

- Most effective intervention programs are comprehensive and build significant school and family connections (2001)
- Programs must begin by the seventh grade (2000)

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Perna (2002)

Five Critical Components

- a college attendance goal,
- early intervention (at least 8th grade),
- rigorous K-12 course-taking,
- parental involvement, and
- college informational and motivational experiences (fairs, tours, visits, etc.).

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Tierney et al. (2004)

Clear Evidence of Effectiveness

- Academic preparation, Family Involvement, and Counseling

Suggestive Evidence

- Peers, Mentoring, Cultural Enrichment Component, Early Start

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Summary of Evidence

- Done well, programs can double college enrollment rates
- Works best for students with initially low expectations and achievement
- Should start at least by 7th grade
- Should be comprehensive (involving families and schools)

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Summary of Evidence-2

Effective Components

- High quality academic support
- Caring adults (counselors, mentors, etc.)
- Long-term commitment
- Peer groups, especially for minority students help with identity and aspiration development
- Attention to students' cultural background
- Families
- Financial assistance

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Summary of Evidence-3

Research literature finds that intervention programs have very little impact on academic achievement even though they can be effective in providing academic support or enrichment.

Academic support can not substitute for core academic learning and achievement which takes place in schools!

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Links Between Intervention Programs and Schools

- Intervention programs will continue to have limited impact without focused and committed engagement by the schools (Gándara & Bial).
- Kirst and Venezia (2001) call for better information and closer linkages between K-12 schools and college preparation mission and "universal programs for all students."

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Structural Conditions

Schools are “first among equals”
with students on the college
preparatory project.

Without schools, students don’t
complete the first two of Cabrera and
La Nasa’s three critical tasks:

- **Acquiring academic qualifications**
- **Securing high school diploma**
- Applying to and enrolling in college


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College Enrollment: Whose Mission? Whose Job?

- In what job description does it say
“help students prepare to college?”
- In what accountability system are
educational leaders held
accountable for college enrollment
rates?

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Appropriate Delivery Systems For College Awareness, College Knowledge, and College Preparation

Within a partnership of K-12
schools, Community groups
Postsecondary institutions, and
Family systems.

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Should Colleges Invest in Pre-College Programs and Why?

Yes, Yes and Yes!!

- These programs are necessary
- They supply our raw materials--
students
- We need to ensure access for low-
income and disadvantaged
students
- We need to ensure equity in access

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Colleges & Universities Investing

- Teacher Education Programs
- Educational Leadership Programs
- Professional Development Activities
- Admissions and Outreach Offices
- Graduate Research Training
- Partnerships
- Courses
- Faculty

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McDonough and McClafferty

School-center pre-college access program, with a goal of preparing all students for a full range of post-secondary options through structural, motivational, and experiential college preparatory opportunities.

- Nine interrelated college culture principles
- Involves all members of the school community
- Require systemic change

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