Middle School Blugold Beginnings Program: An Assessment of Growth and Outcomes of Students Enrolled in the Program
Sheina Wind, Txuei Xiong, Grant Butterfield & Kou Yang
Heather Harris & Katie Gorrill

Background

Mentoring programs have grown substantially in number over the past few years, with more than 15,000 such programs currently serving approximately 3 million youth (National Mentoring Partnership, 2008). Over the past 20 years, college access programs have been developed to the point of being a mainstay in networks that allow mentors to become involved in middle school students' college career development. The results of this program are clear: students who report higher levels of support from mentors are more likely to persist through high school in order to get accepted into college (Kolberg & Johnson, 2010). Exactly how? College mentors are defined as possessing the skills to act as navigators, uncovering the sources available to students, and provoking them toward self-reflection about their college aspirations (Charles, Z., Roscigno, V. J., & Torres, K. C., 2007).

Several recent reports suggest that most adults, parents, and students are uninformed or poorly informed about the costs of higher education (Perna, 2006). Students who lack awareness and understanding about college prices and financial aid are less likely to pursue higher education (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Bowen, 2004). This unawareness typically fuels the economic insecurity that increasingly affects people of all ages and income levels (Charles, Z., Roscigno, V. J., & Torres, K. C., 2007).

Research suggests that most adults, parents, and students are uninformed or poorly informed about the costs of higher education (Perna, 2006). It is increasingly evident that students may need to be informed about the costs of higher education (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Bowen, 2004). This unawareness typically fuels the economic insecurity that increasingly affects people of all ages and income levels (Charles, Z., Roscigno, V. J., & Torres, K. C., 2007).

Method

Mentoring Session

Students were administered the Survey 1 homework management survey to students in each middle school during the first week of classes in the fall. During these times, they were assessed their homework management skills. Specifically, students’ homework management skills were assessed using the Self-Reported Knowledge of Post-Secondary Concepts.

Overall Change in Knowledge

Students who participated in the Blugold Beginnings research had significant increases in their level of understanding in the areas related to their post-secondary education. Students reported significant improvements in understanding the steps needed to get into a post-secondary program of their choice from the first survey (Mean = 3.84, SD = 1.64) to the second survey (Mean = 4.46, SD = 1.09), t(104) = 4.17, p < .001.

Discussion

The overall findings from the Middle School Blugold Beginnings Program suggest that participants could benefit from increasing the amount of research conducted into students' awareness of college financial aid. While participants reported an overall increase in knowledge from the beginning of the program, this change was not statistically significant. One area of the study that may be of most interest to policymakers is the impact of the Blugold Beginnings Program on students' understanding of college prices and financial aid.

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