



Evaluation of College Possible Postsecondary Outcomes, 2007-2012

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Highlights

College Possible students enroll in college at much higher rates than do students nationally.

College Possible students persist in college at high rates, with Fall to Spring persistence rates ranging from 93% to 86% and Spring to Fall persistence ranging from 89% to 79%.

44% of students from the 2007 College Possible high school cohort earned a Bachelor's degree within 5 years, compared to only 11% in a national study of low-income, first-generation college students.

Only 10% of students from the 2007 College Possible high school cohort pursuing an Associate's degree attained one within 3 years.

College Possible coaching exerts a significant and positive influence on college success. The more hours of coaching students receive, the more likely they are to enroll in, persist throughout, and complete college.

ACT scores, high school grade point averages (GPA), and the ratio of full- to part-time students at the colleges students attend are significantly associated with college success.

While certain student demographic characteristics (such as racial/ethnic minority status or first-generation college attendee status) can be negatively correlated with college success, College Possible coaching appears to help overcome those disparities.

Executive Summary

Study Purpose

College Possible is a nonprofit organization providing coaching services to low-income students in Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon and Wisconsin to support their college success. In February of 2013, College Possible contracted with ICF International (hereafter, ICF) to analyze key postsecondary outcomes and identify factors associated with student success in college.

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to analyze the college preparation, enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates of College Possible students and identify variables that are correlated with positive student outcomes. Findings from this evaluation will help College Possible staff and stakeholders to better understand program impact and to gain insight into the factors that enable or constrain student outcomes. In addition, study results can inform programmatic improvements and support communication with College Possible audiences.

To achieve the study goals, the following evaluation questions guided data analyses and interpretation:

- What are college outcomes for students in the College Possible program?
- Do student outcomes vary by the type of institution that College Possible students attend or by the coaching services they receive?
- What other factors appear to influence student success?

Study Methods

College Possible provided to ICF data collected and maintained by the organization for high school graduation cohorts 2007 through 2012. Data hailed from several sources, including Naviance (a college and career readiness student tracking platform used by College Possible), the College Possible student enrollment profile, and student postsecondary information from the National Student Clearinghouse.

In addition, with the assistance of College Possible staff, evaluators used National Center for Education Statistics institutional codes to obtain college data. These data included information about the institutional characteristics of the postsecondary institutions in which College Possible students enrolled, such as status (public vs. private) and type (2-year vs. 4-year).

Analyses conducted by ICF include

- descriptive statistics (percentages, means, cross tabulations) for key outcomes, and
- multivariate logistic regression models to explore the individual and combined effect of various College Possible, college, and student factors on key outcomes.

Findings

What are college outcomes for students in the College Possible program?

- College Possible students enroll in college at much higher rates than do similar students nationally. The immediate college enrollment rate for high school graduates from low-income families is 52%, compared to 82% for students from high-income families.¹ College Possible students' immediate enrollment rates ranged from 82% to 88%.
- College Possible students tend to persist between Fall and Spring semesters at high rates (ranging from a high of 93% to low of 86%).
- The transition between the first Spring semester and the second Fall semester appears especially challenging for students, regardless of whether students are enrolled at 4-year or 2-year colleges. The lowest persistence rates for both groups appear at this transition point.
- Associate's degree completion rates are very low among College Possible cohorts. Ten percent (10%) of those pursuing such a degree in the 2007 cohort earned one within 3 years; 7% of students in the 2008 and 2009 cohorts did so.
- Bachelor's degree attainment rates are much higher, with 44% of students in the 2007 cohort earning their degree within 5 years. By comparison, only 11% of low-income, first-generation college students in a national study earned a Bachelor's degree within 6 years.² Total completion rates (that is, the percent of students earning either an

¹ Source: National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *Percentage of Recent High School Completers Enrolled in 2-year and 4-year Colleges, By Income Level: 1975 through 2011*. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_236.asp

² Source: The Pell Institute. (2011). *6-Year Degree Attainment Rates for Students Enrolled in a Post-Secondary Institution*. Retrieved from http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/fact_sheets-6-Year_DAR_for_Students_Post-Secondary_Institution_121411.pdf

Associate's degree within 3 years or a Bachelor's degree within 5) were 41% among the 2007 cohort.

Do student outcomes vary by the type of institution that College Possible students attend or by the coaching services they receive?

- The majority of College Possible students enrolled in 4-year rather than 2-year colleges, and in public rather than private institutions.
- Semester-to-semester persistence rates for College Possible students were far higher for those attending 4-year institutions and for those enrolled in private colleges.
- College Possible students attending private institutions tend to persist between semesters at higher rates than students enrolled in public colleges. Among the 2007 cohort, for example, semester-to-semester persistence rates ranged from 100% to 85% for students enrolled in private schools, while rates for those attending public colleges ranged from 93% to 82%.
- Students attending private 4-year institutions were more likely to earn a Bachelor's degree than were those enrolled in public 4-year colleges.
- Students who received more hours of College Possible coaching during their junior and senior years of high school were 1.65 times more likely to enroll in college than students who received fewer hours.
- Students who received more hours of College Possible coaching during their junior and senior years of high schools were 1.29 times more likely to persist between the first and second years of college and 1.45 times more likely to persist between the second and third years than their peers receiving fewer hours.
- Students who received more College Possible coaching during their third year of college were 1.58 times more likely to transition successfully from their third to their fourth years of college than were their counterparts who received less coaching.
- Students who received more hours of College Possible coaching over the course of their college career were 1.59 times more likely to attain a Bachelor's degree within 4 years than their peers who received fewer hours.
- Students who received more hours of College Possible coaching over the course of their college career were 3.85 times more likely to attain a Bachelor's degree within 5 years than their peers who received fewer hours.

What other factors appear to influence student success?

- Higher ACT scores are strongly and positively associated with enrollment, persistence through the third year of college, and completion of a Bachelor's degree within 4 years.
- High school grade point average (GPA) is the most consistent predictor of the likelihood that College Possible students will achieve positive postsecondary outcomes.
- Students attending schools with higher ratios of full-time to part-time students were approximately two times more likely to earn a Bachelor's degree within four or five years than their peers at schools with lower ratios of full-time students.
- While certain student demographic characteristics (such as racial/ethnic minority status or first-generation college attendee status) can be negatively associated with college success, College Possible coaching appears to help overcome such disparities.

Recommendations

- Findings from this study provide considerable support for program continuation.
- Program staff might consider strategies for maximizing the amount of coaching students receive, given the strong correlation between hours of College Possible coaching and positive postsecondary outcomes.
- College Possible staff should continue to stress the importance of academic achievement during high school. Both GPAs and ACT scores were correlated with positive college outcomes.
- College Possible staff may want to consider providing additional support to students at 2-year schools, public institutions, and colleges with low ratios of full- to part-time students